With Pack And Rifle

By

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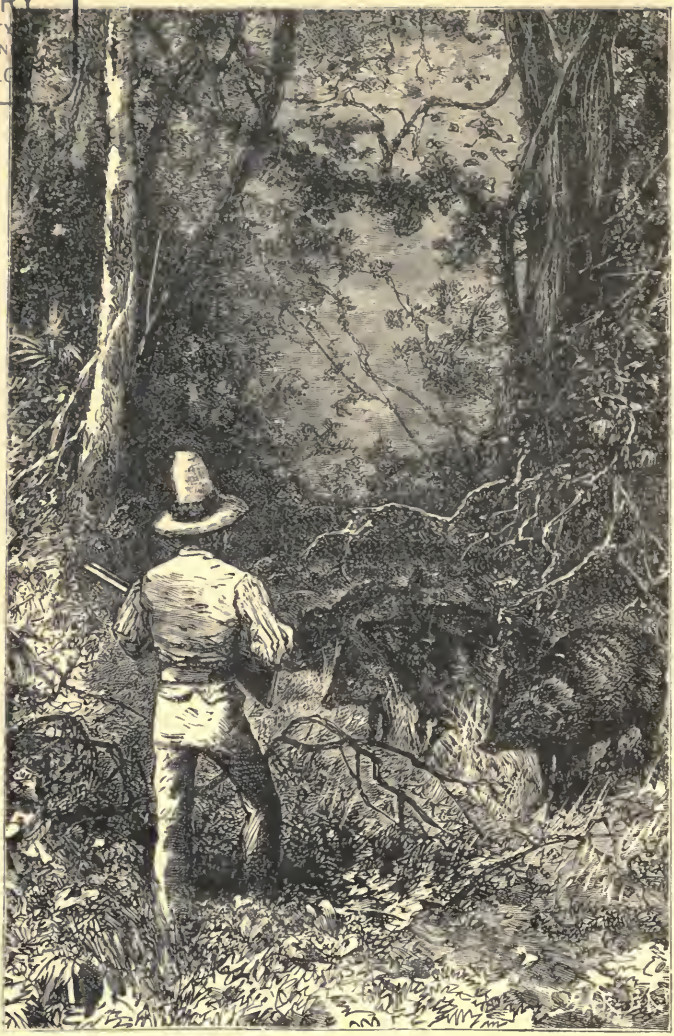

WILL AND THE PECCARIES.

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WITH PACK AND RIFLE

IN THE FAR SOUTH-WEST.

FORDING THE MOTAGUA.

Page 208.

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WITH PACK AND RIFLE

IN THE FAR SOUTH-WEST.

Adventures in New Mexico, Arizona, and Central America.

A Book for Boys.

By

ACHILLES DAUNT,

Author of "Frank Redcliffe," "The Three Trappers," &c. &c.

With 25 Illustrations

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WITH PACK AND RIFLE
IN THE FAR SOUTH-WEST.

CHAPTER I.

SCENES OF ROMANTIC ADVENTURE—THE WILD WEST—DESERTS—ANCIENT SEAS—MESAS—CAÑONS—BAD LANDS—FOSSILS—SAND-STREAMS—RIVERS—SHIFTING SAND-BEDS—SUDDEN FLOODS—DANGERS OF BEING LOST—FOREST FIRES—PRAIRIE FIRES—GAME.

If the western portion of the North American Continent had been "made to order," it could hardly have been better suited to the requirements of the hunter and lover of adventure. Nowhere else, if we except some portions of South Africa, roamed such immense numbers of game animals; nowhere else is nature formed on so grand a scale, and so infinitely diversified. The vast prairies and plains teemed with countless buffaloes, antelopes, red deer, and elk; the high table-lands and mountains held myriads of black-tailed deer, elk, white-tailed deer, mountain sheep, and wood bison; while the carnivora were represented by great numbers of grizzly, cinnamon, and black bears, cougars, panthers, wolves, and wild cats. Smaller game existed in incredible abundance. Even at the present day, the numbers in which some of these creatures are met by the traveller or hunter excite his astonishment, notwithstanding that they are but the feeble

remnants of the vast bands which formerly roamed over those extensive wilds. And what a country to hunt over! How magnificent are its features! how varied and how vast!

As some information with regard to the most striking of these cannot but be of interest to the reader, we will preface this little work with a description of such as will render the subsequent chapters more intelligible.

The term "the West," or "the Far West," is a variable one, and in the past had reference to regions which at the present time are not understood as implied by the phrase. Nowadays, when we speak of "the West," we mean that portion of the continent which lies immediately east of the Rocky Mountains, and known as "the Plains," as well as the mountains themselves and the country extending thence to the Pacific.

In maps which are hardly yet considered obsolete, the great region east of the mountains is represented in an almost primitive condition. The principal rivers are indicated, as are also the chief features of the landscape; but, with a few exceptions, the towns which have sprung up of late years are unmarked, thus giving rise to the impression that the great bulk of the country is still an unpeopled solitude.

There are even greater errors than this. The writer possesses two maps, published under the superintendence of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, in which such glaring mistakes occur as locating the State of Nebraska in the area occupied by Montana, and representing New Mexico as lying north of Arizona, and separated from it by the 34th degree of latitude. These two latter sections lie contiguous east and west, their boundaries being coincident with the line of longitude 109°. Such maps are of little utility.

The vast regions lying west of the Missouri and of the frontiers of the States of Arkansas and Louisiana, and north of the 31st degree of latitude, are represented by a blank, broken only by the names of the chief rivers, or of the military posts of the United States Government. Due allowance, however, must be made for the mushroom growth of towns and settlements in the West. A year has proved quite sufficient in many instances to change the aspect of the country. Railways have extended themselves over the face of the land almost with the rapidity of growth of the gossamers we see glancing on our lawns in the morning sunlight, carrying civilization in their track, and banishing alike the romance and the game of the great wilderness.

Extending east to west, from the Missouri River to the Pacific Ocean, and north to south from Alaska to Panama, the continent of America presents the general features of a vast plateau of various elevations; and through this have been upheaved the great mountain chains which form the backbone of the continent.

By referring to a good map, the reader will observe a great region designated as "the Plains," extending from the so-called Guadalupe Mountains of north-western Texas to the 49th degree of north latitude, bounded on the east by the Missouri, and fenced in on the west by the ridges of the Rocky Mountains. This vast district probably contains within its limits more features of interest to the geographer, the geologist, and the sportsman, than any other of equal extent elsewhere. The geologist will here find Nature's volume expanded for his inspection; and the secrets which in other places she attempts to guard by the confusion of strata produced by her convulsions, she here seems to write in such plain language that the least experienced must find little difficulty in reading them.

The great plains lying east of the Rocky Mountains have in all likelihood been formed by the denudation and subsequent disruption of chains of gigantic mountains in long past ages upheaved from the ocean, which for countless cycles dashed its waves against their skirts and bases, gradually wearing down and washing away the materials of which they were composed, and depositing them to serve as the foundations of the present continent. Along by the foot of the mountains to-day, the traveller is astonished to observe vast tracts covered with enormous deposits of rounded pebbles, water-worn stones, and dunes of sand, the relics of this primeval time. These dismal deserts occur almost throughout the whole length of the mountains, and are characteristic of the great "divide," which separates the systems of the South Platte and Republican rivers. It is especially well marked near Colorado Springs, where the deposit is several hundred feet in thickness. From this point it extends in an easterly direction; but its limits here have not been yet defined. Southwards, however, it is known to follow the mountains, and through it the Arkansas cuts it way. The plateau on which is situated the town of Pueblo owes its origin to this formation, which seems finally to have been merged or covered up in the volcanic region south of the Cumbres Españolas, or Spanish Peaks. From the extent of this stream of ruin, some idea can be formed of the vast size of the mountains which gave it birth.

An examination of the country to the south and west of the Spanish Peaks reveals the fact that at one time, apparently not very remote, this was the seat of volcanic energy on a most gigantic scale. The whole country seems to have been deluged with molten rocks and smothered under volcanic tufa. On all sides may be seen extinct volcanoes of every variety of shape; some sharp, with many a jagged crag and

grisly peak; others of graceful shape, as if the fire king were not always in a fury at their birth.

Not far from the head-waters of the Cimarron River is situated one of these milder children. It is named the "Capulin," and rises from the plain, in almost the precise form of a lady's thimble, to the height of one thousand feet a cone of lava. The ascent is easy, owing to the collapse of the western side—most likely during one of the last eruptions. Luckily, this gigantic breach does not interfere with the regularity of the shape viewed from the other sides.

Some three or four miles away to the south-west is another fire-born hill—Mount Tilden. The elevation of this is inconsiderable; but owing to the fact that the sides are covered with a loose, shifting material, into which the visitor sinks deeply at every step, the ascent is more fatiguing than would be inferred from the height, which is only about eight hundred feet, although the plain from which both these ancient volcanoes spring is fully six thousand feet above the level of the ocean.

There is evidence to show that during ages—how long we cannot tell—the Plains were subjected to constant upheavals and depressions; now covered by the inrushing ocean, again tossed up high above its level. The earliest of these upheavals is stated to have originated in the country occupied by the Raton Mountains, the Mesa Grande and the Mesa de Maio. These have an elevation at present of from six thousand to eight thousand feet. This region consists in great part of a plain encumbered with ridges of lava and partially melted rocks, and is thickly strewed with tufa and other remains of volcanic origin. The escarpments bordering this plateau are as fresh-looking as if upheaved but yesterday, whereas, in fact, they have looked upon the changes effected

all round them on more perishable monuments, themselves unchangeable as time itself.

A subsequent upheaval is said to have lifted the continent to a higher elevation above sea level, forcing up the western or "High Plains" to a height varying from four thousand to seven thousand feet. Nature selected more perishable materials on this occasion. The rocks are, indeed, in some instances as sharp in outline as those of the volcanic areas; but, as a rule, the formations are of more modern date. Possibly, the volcanic rocks were again replaced in their former position by this later upheaval, in which they became mingled with others of more recent character.

It is in this secondary plateau that the rivers, which either rise in the mountains on the west or at the point of junction of the first and second plains, have cut out those stupendous channels known as cañons, which excite the amazement of visitors from lands where Nature works on a scale far less striking. Those rivers which cut through the strata of both plains exhibit a profundity of depth in their beds which appals the traveller who ventures to peer over the verge of the abyss. The cañons of the Purgatory River are frequently two thousand feet in height. Those of the Colorado attain the immense altitude above the river of seven thousand feet.

The Mississippi and Missouri valleys bound the third great plain on the east. From the level of these rivers the land rises towards the west, until it reaches the confines of the second plain, where it attains an elevation of from three thousand to four thousand feet over the level of the sea.

This portion of the country seems of comparatively recent formation, and is built up by the detritus brought down from the higher plains and mountains, deposited as silt on the old ocean bed. There is in this region nothing to sug-

SNOWY RANGE.

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gest upheaval. One is more led to suppose that the ocean slowly drained off its surface, than that, yielding to interior pressure, the face of the country was forced upwards through the waters. We therefore find that this plain is less varied in its features than either of the others. It is, in fact, uninteresting from its monotonous uniformity.

"Standing on the second plain," says Colonel Dodge, speaking of the view from the road between Forts Lyon and Union, "and looking west, the horizon is bounded by the long line of peaks of the Snowy Range towering to the skies, and glittering in everlasting white. Apparently at their feet, though more than a hundred miles from them, and looking like a black table against a white wall, are the Raton Mountains; the first plain, or horizontal upheaval. A little to the right, and seemingly very near, are the Cumbres Españolas (Spanish Peaks); and still farther to the north-west, the Sangre de Cristo, Greenhorn (or Cuernaverde), Cheyenne, and a vast succession of mountain upon mountain, range after range, the whole overtopped by the magnificent mountain called Pike's Peak—so appropriately named after its original discoverer, then Lieutenant, but subsequently General Zabulon Pike.

"To the south-west, and within five or six miles, the Mesa de Maio, an uninterrupted continuation of the Raton plain, rises like a huge black wall one thousand feet from the high (or second) plain upon which we stand, and which, to our rear, by a sudden and precipitous plunge of eight hundred to twelve hundred feet, reaches the third or lowest plain—the basin proper of the Mississippi and Missouri—which stretches in limitless expanse to the eastward. From this position can be seen in plainest form, and with all its marked peculiarities, Nature's handiwork in the four great general upheavals, which, in my opinion, brought this portion of the

continent from the depths of the ocean. In some portions of the middle plains Nature seems to have endeavoured to outdo her previous efforts, and to try how many and varied forms the surface of the earth could be forced to assume by means of partial upheavals. Some of the most curious of these formations are to the west of the Laramie Plains.

"Twenty miles south of Rawlin's Springs is another curious freak of nature—the parallel ridges being overturned, not by the upheaval of a wedge-shaped mountain" (as has happened in the district west of Laramie), "but by the successive lifts given to a huge plain (part of first plain). A succession of parallel ranges of barren, rocky hills is finally greatly overtopped by what appears, looking at its face, to be a fine mountain range, it being eight thousand or nine thousand feet high; and on this face, looking north, can all the year be found patches of snow. Reaching its summit with difficulty, one is surprised to find, stretching far to the south and west, an apparently boundless plain, with a gentle declination from the northern face. Proceeding a mile or two south, this plain begins to be broken, with the shallow depressions deepening gradually into ravines, the beds of beautiful streams (full of fine trout), the heads of the Muddy, a tributary of Green River."

The bed of an ancient lake farther west has been forced upwards; and at Church Buttes it is now from one hundred to two hundred feet above its former level. These Buttes are still quite soft, and in their stratifications are the relics of ancient reptiles; while scattered along the plain at some distance from their base are millions of beautiful specimens of moss-agates and petrifactions.

Another strange formation of this wild western country is what is popularly known as "the Bad Lands." This is, perhaps, one of the most fantastic freaks of Nature in a country

HEADWATERS OF GREEN RIVER.

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where she seems so often to depart from her accustomed simplicity, and to take delight in imitating the creations of human art. Stretching more or less continuously from the Loup River to the mouth of the Yellowstone, this extraordinary formation presents an ever-changing variety. In pre-historic times this region was beyond doubt the bed of a vast lake or inland sea. It is probable that it either evaporated or slowly drained off, leaving in its stead a marsh, which in that state remained for thousands of years, or at any rate for a very extended period. The soil is here thickly filled with the bones of animals; and it is observable that the larger remains are generally in an upright position, as if the creatures had sunk in the soft ground and thus perished. In some parts, the once soft bed of this ancient lake is six hundred feet thick, and the materials of which it is composed are regularly distributed in layers or strata.

Writing of these formations, Colonel Dodge says :—

"The curious peculiarity of the Bad Lands formation is that the channels cut by rain and frost in this soft deposit have almost invariably perpendicular sides, and differ from ordinary ravines in that there is no gradual deepening. They appear to cut at once through the whole thickness of the deposit, are exceedingly tortuous, and vary in width with the nature of the particular locality, or with the length of time that the process of erosion has been going on.

"With this general peculiarity, the Bad Lands vary in the most extraordinary degree. In some localities the upper plain appears at a little distance unmarked; but an attempt to pass over it discloses the fact that it is scored in every direction by innumerable narrow, crooked channels from thirty to one hundred feet in perpendicular depth, and from a few inches to eighty or one hundred feet in width. Through

such "bad" lands no one but the most experienced plainsman can hope to make headway."

Time, which leaves its mark as well upon the monuments of nature as upon those of human art, works endless alterations in these formations. "In process of time, the narrow grass-covered portions of plain between the channels are gradually cut away into 'backbones,' at first very sharp and narrow; getting broader, however, as more of the material is washed away. This is called the 'Hogsback Bad Lands,' and in most of its stages is utterly impassable. When most of the material inside a particular bed has been washed out, and the 'hogsbacks' levelled with the foundation plain, the Bad Lands present their most striking characteristics.

"Imagine an immense irregular bowl-shaped depression in the earth, from four to ten miles in diameter, the sides from one hundred to six hundred feet high, cut by the action of water into myriads of forms, regular, irregular, and fantastic. The general bottom of the bowl is level; and scattered over it in most picturesque irregularity are hills and mounds, with their almost perpendicular faces cut into every conceivable and inconceivable design—castles and towers, domes and pinnacles, obelisks, monuments, and pyramids. The palace and the Indian 'tepee' are here side by side; and all the varied forms are fluted by water and frescoed by variously-coloured earths, forming a grand and wonderful *coup d'œil* that no man can imagine or realize until he sees it."

With such infinite variety of outline, ploughed by channels narrow, wide, deep, and tortuous, the reader will probably suppose that to travel across this region would be all but impossible. It is, however, not so in practice. The buffaloes have their trails worn deep into the soil which traverses the Bad Lands; and by keeping to the route thus

ROCKS NEAR THE RIO MIMBRES.

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marked out for him, the traveller need not anticipate being brought to a halt by the difficulties of his path. Around and on every side are vestiges of ancient animal life. The bones of many species of reptiles as well as of animals strew the ground; and among them may be discerned the monstrous relics of the mastodon and of the saurian, as well as of the minutest reptiles, which seem classified by time, each speaking of a distinct epoch in the history of the spot.

It is not merely in the Bad Lands that these remains are found. All over the plains they recur in greater or lesser quantities, mingled with shells and most curious petrifactions. Nor are they confined to the surface. Colonel Dodge relates that when the Union Pacific Railroad was in process of construction, an attempt was made to sink a well at Julesburg. The attempt was a failure so far as its object was concerned; but to the great interest of the bystanders, the boring tool brought up from a depth of from two hundred to three hundred feet the bones of many kinds of animals in every stage of preservation.

Some of the relics brought to light in these regions belonged to animals of the most colossal size. One of these ancient monsters, judging from the weight and dimensions of his bones, must have measured thirty feet in height and eighty feet in length!

We have alluded to the petrifactions strewed over these desert solitudes. So widely disseminated are they, that not a spot of pebbly ground but will be found upon examination to contain specimens. Sometimes they occur thinly; at others they will be found in incalculable quantities, covering acres of surface. Many are most beautiful and perfect.

The author from whom we have quoted, writing on this subject, says: "Sometimes acres of plain will be covered with specimens of wood-agates of almost every shade of

colour, from pure white to jet black, from almost perfect transparency to thickest opacity, all solidified in the hardest of quartz, but showing the annual rings of woody fibre as clearly as if the specimen had just been torn from its native tree. Sometimes whole forests appear to have been converted into stone. In a small ravine, a dry tributary of Two Butte Creek, I once came upon what appeared to be a sort of raft or obstruction of logs. As it is a perfectly treeless country, I was led to a closer examination, and to my surprise found that the logs were stone. Never elsewhere have I seen petrifactions so perfect. One huge trunk of a pine-tree was about six feet in diameter, and ten or twelve feet long. It was hollow, and a portion of the hollow part had been burned away. The bark, the wood, the hollow, the marks of fire, were all perfectly natural, yet the log was solid stone."

Scattered all around were many similar objects, all turned to stone. One of the most singular cases of petrifaction mentioned by Colonel Dodge he describes as follows :—

"Once marching with a command near the Medicine Bow Creek, I was searching for a crossing over a deep and difficult ravine for my waggons, when I came to a stump of a pine-tree about two feet high and twelve inches in diameter. About it were lying large chips, such as none but an experienced axe-man and a good axe take from trees in felling. Something attracted my close attention to the stump, which I found to be of stone. On dismounting and picking up the chips, I found that they also were stone. This tree had undoubtedly been cut down by a white man, probably since the exodus of the Mormons. The petrifaction of the stump is easily accounted for; but how account for the conversion to stone of the scattered chips, lying on the dry, hard surface of the ground away from moisture?"

There are large districts comprised within the plains, which

are in reality vast beds of gypsum covered with a deposit of soil or detritus. The drainage of these regions disappears beneath the surface and makes tunnels through the gypsum, discharging itself into the rivers, not by ravines or other channels, but beneath the surface of the ground, through caves and openings in the face of the high banks.

The tributaries of the Cimarron River on both sides of its course have ploughed out for themselves deep channels through a deposit of this substance of immense thickness. There, according to Colonel Dodge, may be found specimens of selenite as transparent as glass, and fair samples of alabaster.

Along the course of the Cimarron River, for a distance of about forty miles, lies a great salt plain. For an equal distance the bed of the river is composed of loose sands, eight hundred or nine hundred yards in width, and frequently so soft as to form quicksands. Attracted by the saline particles, the buffaloes used to flock thither and greedily lick the sand. There are salt springs near Buffalo Creek, which discharge water so highly impregnated with salt as to be almost pure brine. Hundreds of acres are laid with a stratum of pure crystallized rock salt, as good in quality as any which can be prepared by man.

Other regions are covered for many miles with alkali. Such is the Bitter Creek country west of the North Platte in the direction of Green River. For miles not a particle of verdure, excepting here and there the artemisia, relieves the utterly sterile desert. The earth is covered by the whitish deposit, and presents an expanse so dreary and monotonous that the eye of the traveller aches with its uniformity. Well would it be for him if it ached from no other cause. The dry, porous efflorescence is blown before the wind, and finds its way into the mouth, nose, eyes,

throat, and produces intense suffering if the unfortunate wayfarer continues long exposed to its influence. The eyes become irritated by the strong glare, then inflamed, blood-shot, and drip with tears; the skin dries up, cracks, and peels off; the tongue becomes swollen and feels too thick for the mouth, and blood oozes through fissures in the lips.

If the wretched traveller should get lost, or "turned round," as the phrase is, in one of these horrible deserts, his fate is sealed. Water, his first want, he will not find; or if he should come upon a spring, it is so impregnated with alkali as to be devoid of the power to quench thirst; it irritates the alimentary canal, and inflames the bowels. Death soon relieves the sufferer; and his whitening bones, polished by wolves and vultures, serve to show those whose ill-fortune has also brought them to these repulsive regions, that they would do well to haste away lest the same fate should befall them.

There is another of these deserts near the Upper Red River, but not quite so dangerous to cross as that between the North Platte and Green River.

I have said that the rivers which rise in the mountains, or at the junction of the several plains with each other, cut deep channels for themselves as they flow eastward. Looking over these plains, no great object breaks the uniform level. Colonel Dodge, describing these plains and rivers, says:—

"Away from the vicinity of the junction of the plains, we appear to be surrounded on all sides by a boundless expanse of dead level. This appearance is due to the fact that in looking at it the eye catches only the higher lines of the upper surface of a plain which was originally almost a dead level.

"I have already said that the inclination of all the plains

BUFFALOES ON THE PLAINS. Page 31.

is from the mountains. How decided this inclination must have been at first is proved by the peculiarity of the streams. The larger rivers—the Platte, the Arkansas, and the Canadian—taking their rise in the mountains, were already pouring their waters towards the ocean in tortuous channels, scarcely yet worn through the new upheaval. They kept a general course down the inclination; the Arkansas alone swerved from its direct course by a mass of hilly country (which will, I think, be found referable to the second plain). The first rains which fell upon the newly-raised lands had to make channels for themselves. They naturally sought the greatest inclination. It was from the mountains.

"An examination of a good map will show how completely the streams appear to ignore each other, and how each independently takes its own course towards the sea. Rain which falls within four hundred yards of the Arkansas runs into Pawnee Fork, keeping nearly parallel to the larger stream for two hundred miles before finally uniting with it. .....The streams which take their rise in the mountains cut their way through the second plain in cañons more or less wide and deep, depending on the nature of the material encountered. The South Platte (at first deflected from its natural course, and sent to the northward by the immense mass of *débris* washed from the mountains and deposited in the sea as a bar) gets through with difficulty, but cutting no very remarkable cañon—the materials through which it makes its way being of such a nature as to be rapidly rounded into hills and easily worn away into slopes. The Arkansas cuts through the same 'bar,' but encounters from the second plain a more rigid resistance than the Platte, and it gets a long way from the mountains before fairly out of cañon."

It is, however, the tributaries of this last named river

that present us with the most striking examples of cañon; and perhaps the finest are those upon the Purgatory (the "Purgatoire" of the old voyageurs, and "Pickatwaire" of the "mountain men"). For more than fifty miles the deeply excavated bed of this river lies beneath perpendicular cliffs of red sandstone, sometimes receding and again approaching to within a few hundred yards of each other, and varying in height from eight hundred to one thousand feet.

There are, of course, elsewhere upon the continent much profounder chasms than these, notably those on the upper waters of the Peace River in British America, which are often from four thousand to six thousand feet in perpendicular height. Such also are the famous cañons of the Colorado. The Cimarron River also flows for many miles at the bottom of the most tremendous cañons east of the mountains, cut through the thickness or altitude of both the first and second plains.

It will readily be seen how difficult these great clefts in the plains render travel through these regions, when the track of the hunter or explorer leads him at right angles to their course. But this difficulty is not much lessened even when some of these rivers have at length emerged from their stony barriers and flow through sandy plains.

To quote again from Colonel Dodge: "In April, the Arkansas at Fort Dodge is a sandy bed, a fourth of a mile in width, and with possibly an average of three or four inches of water. In June, when the mountains send forth their floods of melted snow, the river swells, the current increases in power and washes out long channels in the sandy bed. When the banks show a rise of two feet, the waters cut channels in the sand, five or six feet deep, and covering probably a full third of the distance from bank to bank. At these times the current may be said to be a huge

HEADWATERS OF THE CANADIAN.

wave of sand, surging, rolling, turning, and shifting with incessant activity. Where there is six feet of water in the morning, there may be by noon a bar with but an inch. By night the bar may be gone, and a deep channel in its place. These channels are from ten to thirty feet wide, with generally perpendicular sides. Some force will set a current in a particular direction across a bar. In a few moments a channel from three to six feet deep is cut, through which the water pours as in a mill-race. A shift or change above diverts the current to some other direction, and in almost as few moments the recent channel is filled up to within a few inches of the surface of the water. As the currents by turn set in almost every conceivable direction with reference to the general course of the stream, so the channels may be parallel, oblique, or even perpendicular to that general course. Even leaving out of consideration the danger of quicksands, it can readily be seen that the crossing of such a stream is no child's play. A good place of entrance being found, the horse and rider, stripped of every superfluous article, wade in. For a few paces the horse steps along in water but a couple of inches in depth. Without a moment's notice or preparatory deepening his fore feet go down under him, and he plunges head first into swimming water with a tremendous current. He has hardly recovered the shock and struck out fairly in swimming before his chest strikes a wall of sand, on which, after many struggles and plunges, he finally succeeds in obtaining a footing. Again he walks in shallow water, again to be plunged suddenly into a treacherous channel, again to scramble, plunge, and strain to get out of it. Imagine this done over and over again for twenty or thirty times, and with an infinity of variations, and an idea can be formed of the crossing of a plains-river in high water. All the streams which come from the mountains are the

same in this peculiarity." Thousands of buffaloes, as well as many men and horses, have been engulfed in the treacherous sands of these rivers.

The plains as a rule are destitute of trees. Sometimes in cañons where some soil has collected, or where the "bottom" is sufficiently wide and free from inundation, there are groves of cotton-wood and poplar, small pines and cedars. In the larger bottoms there are often fine growths of well-grown trees, hackberries, elms, interspersed with many kinds of shrubs interlaced with vines and variegated with flowers. It is remarkable that these groves are found only in the narrower portions of the river channels. As these widen out, the trees gradually disappear; and when at length the river reaches the lowest or third plain, neither tree nor shrub breaks the oppressive uniformity of the expanse. The smaller tributaries of the larger rivers run beneath a luxuriant foliage of many kinds of trees: fragrance loads the air from millions of sweet-smelling flowers; birds enliven the scene and make the groves vocal with their songs; and bees buzz busily to and fro collecting their winter store. From such scenes of beauty these streams issue into the gloomy sterile cañons of the great rivers, where nothing breaks the silence except the hoarse roar of the ceaseless war which water wages with rock and boulder, and where nothing of beauty meets the eye; which, indeed, on all sides meets with objects of terror.

The grass on the high plains is short; in the river bottoms, however, in suitable places, it is long and rank; and here it is that the most terrible fires take place, when by accident or by Indian treachery the dry or withered herbage is set alight. The flames spread with electric rapidity; and swift must be the flight of the hunter if he effects his escape.

A most singular phenomenon of the plains is the sand-

A PRAIRIE FIRE.

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hills. In "The Hunting Grounds of the Great West" they are well described: "Commencing sometimes high up on the second plain, the sand is arranged or disposed in what may be termed sand-streams. The ground covered varies in width from a few yards to thirty or more miles. Sometimes the sand is piled in oval or conical hills from ten to two hundred feet in height; at other times it seems to cover the ground to a greater or less depth in an almost level mass. These sand-streams pursue an almost unbroken course in a general easterly direction; sometimes, but not invariably, following the course of the larger water-courses. The edges or boundary of the sand are clear cut and well defined;—a remarkable fact, since the sand is so light as to be the sport of every wind. It is in colour from bright yellow to pure white, and the particles of fine sand are so very minute that a handful thrown in the air disappears entirely.

"One of these sand-streams takes its rise in the high land known as the Divide, keeps an easterly course parallel to a tributary of Big Sandy called Rush Creek, crosses the Big Sandy, and makes a sharp bend to the south, following the direction of the Big Sandy to its junction with the Arkansas. It then crosses the Arkansas, and is joined on its south bank by another similar but smaller sand-stream, which, taking its rise in the high table-land between the Purgatory and Arkansas rivers, follows the general course of the latter stream."

The sand takes all kinds of forms. Sometimes it rises over the bed of a stream in bluffs two hundred feet in height; at others it assumes the smooth outlines of cones, domes, and long undulations, which, when formed of white sand, present the aspect of a range of snow-covered hills. The outlines of the sand-covered area do not change, al-

though every wind makes endless alterations in the shapes of knolls, domes, ridges, etc., within these limits.

One of the sand-streams—probably amongst the largest on the continent—starts in the south-western portion of the territory of New Mexico, and trending in a south-easterly direction, crosses the United States boundary into the Mexican State of Chihuahua, keeping parallel to the Rio Grande, and at a distance from that river of from fifty to seventy-five miles. This great stream has a length of more than one hundred miles, and a general width of from twelve to fourteen. There is, however, a region occupied on the Arkansas by sand-hills some three hundred miles in length. In these sand-deserts there lives a pretty little animal, the gopher (which name is given on the high plains to a small striped squirrel, and on the southern plains to a pouched rat). The burrows which this creature excavates render travelling through his settlements more difficult and dangerous than even the "houses" of the well-known prairie-dog in other districts. These latter can be seen and avoided with comparative ease. The burrows of the gopher are not so readily visible; and when urging his horse at speed through them in pursuit of buffalo or antelope, the hunter will be fortunate if he escapes breaking his neck.

As may be supposed, on the open plains the winter is very severe. It is stated by Colonel Dodge that in two years at least one hundred buffalo-hunters perished from cold in a district within one hundred miles of the Arkansas. In 1872, the same gentleman states that at Fort Dodge, where he was in command, at least seventy capital amputations were performed by the post surgeon on buffalo-hunters and railway employés. He is of opinion that in that locality two hundred men lost hands or feet or parts of them. These very cold seasons are, however, fortunately exceptional, and

great storms usually give warning sufficient to any person accustomed to the climatic phenomena of these regions to enable him to betake himself in time to shelter more or less effectual.

Sudden floods form another feature in the dangers of plains-travel. A river channel may be as dry as the sands of the Sahara, when suddenly, without any previous warning, a raging flood will surge along, ten to twenty feet in depth, bearing on its tumultuous crest logs, forest trees, or whatever other jetsam or flotsam it encounters in its mad career. Travellers have often been engulfed by these sudden floods when camping in fancied security in their channels or by their banks. Many interesting particulars of hairbreadth escapes from destruction by these floods could be given if space permitted.

In the great sand-deserts the traveller is exposed to other dangers. The sands are loose and light, and under the impulse of storms or whirlwinds are raised in enormous clouds, which sweep across the thirsty plain, enveloping horse and man in their stifling folds. Sometimes under the influence of whirlwinds the sands are caught up into the semblance of vast towers, which wander in an uncertain course across the waste, appearing endued with life, as though the demons of the desert, if the superstition of the traveller yields to the fancy, impelled them onwards to surround and smother him in their fierce contortions.

The monotonous and vast expanse of the wild plains and high table-lands exposes the hunter or traveller to a calamity which is perhaps that most dreaded of all the risks incidental to these countries. This is the danger of being lost. Let the individual but once forget the direction of his return, or even doubt it—unless he keeps himself cool and uses his judgment, all is over with him. In nine cases out of ten he

will take the wrong direction; or perhaps worse still, walk in a circle of several miles' radius. Under these circumstances the individual lost has frequently been bereft of his reason, and on being discovered by a searching party or by chance passers-by, has actually often been known to fly from them like a wild beast; or, if caught, to struggle for escape with frantic energy.

Space does not allow of a full detail of all the physical characteristics of these extensive regions and their peculiar dangers. I prefer to notice the more salient features of the country west of the Rio Grande, and southwards as we advance upon our journey; and I have prefixed to the narrative the foregoing description of a portion of the wild West, with the view of showing the reader the reality of the dangers, hardships, and difficulties which are inseparable from travel in these wild territories.

CHAPTER II.

VALLEY OF THE RIO GRANDE—MEXICAN ARCHITECTURE—FIELD FOR VINE CULTURE—INDIAN SCARE—TAKE THE TRAIL—LA TENAJA—OUTFIT—RUBE—INDIAN "SIGN"—NIGHT-WATCH—DAWN—MIRAGE—HOW TO PACK A MULE—ANTELOPE—COOKE'S CAÑON—APACHES—THE FIGHT IN THE PASS—RETREAT OF THE SAVAGES—RIO MIMBRES—TROUT—STRANGE ROCK FORMATIONS—OJO CALIENTE—APACHES AGAIN—THE SKIRMISH—SPRING IN THE DESERT—BEAR "SIGN"—THE HUNT—DEATH OF THE BEAR—RUBE'S EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURE IN THE DESERT—THE BURRO MOUNTAINS—MADRE PLATEAU—WILL AND THE BEAR—SOLDIER'S FAREWELL.

THE fine valley of the Grande from Albuquerque to Fort Craig, a distance of one hundred and fifteen miles, is thickly peopled; and on both sides are numerous villages of Pueblo Indians, who may be considered as civilized in comparison with their wild brethren of the plains and mountains. There are also along this portion of the river many small towns, inhabited chiefly by Mexicans. Isleta is perhaps the largest Pueblo town on the river; and in its vicinity are extensive vineyards, which are cultivated by the Indians. The prevailing system of architecture, if it can be dignified by the term, is Mexican in type; the houses are built of adobe, or sun-dried bricks, and many are of two stories. They are not entered directly from the street, but from an inner court, which is not general in the Pueblo towns of the valley; and all, or nearly all, seem to be inhabited by more than one family. The acequias, or little canals for irrigating the gardens, are here well cared for; and there is a general air of comfort about the place and the people, which speaks well for their character.

The soil along the Rio Grande is for the most part sandy and friable, and is therefore easily acted upon by the current of the river, which frequently changes its channel, thus destroying much valuable property, and sweeping away in a very short time the results of the labour of years. Cornfields, canals, and villages are often demolished; and many an industrious villager sees the produce of his labour melting before his eyes, and perhaps transferred piecemeal to his neighbour.

The houses of the poorest of the Mexicans are scrupulously clean and tidy, and, when the owners are in somewhat better circumstances, often betoken a considerable amount of taste in their interior arrangements and embellishments. The "parlour" is carpeted with the fleeces of lambs, as white as the snows of the Sierras; the banquettes or ottomans surrounding the apartment are covered with spotlessly white cotton cloths, or with Mexican blankets gaily striped, but scrupulously clean. The ceilings are formed into pretty patterns with laths of a kind of cane or bamboo, which produces a very neat and striking effect. The people are generally good-natured and civil, and if the traveller puts up at their houses, he will be made to feel at his ease; although his fare, owing to the simplicity of his hosts, will most likely consist of a constant repetition of greasy messes of sun-dried meat, tortillas or thin cakes of Indian corn meal, tough and insipid as sheets of felt, with perhaps red peppers (*chile colorado*), beans, and ill-cooked mutton.

The valley of the Rio Grande offers a splendid field for the enterprise of the wine-growers. There is everywhere throughout the United States a great demand for good wine of any kind, and here the soil and climate seem expressly suited by nature for its production. The grapes are large and of delicious flavour, and, owing to the amount of sugar

in them, they yield a very full-bodied, rich wine, which matures by age into a very superior quality. Perhaps the best portion of the valley for the cultivation of the grape is from Algadones to El Paso, a distance of two hundred miles, and containing probably a thousand square miles, or about six hundred and forty thousand acres. The climate is perfect, and there are few regions where life could be so pleasantly passed as in this valley; while there is conveyed to a northern mind an idea rather of romance than labour, in the prospect of growing rich by the cultivation of one's own vineyard.

But while Nature had done so much to make this region attractive, man had well-nigh rendered it uninhabitable. Nature preached peace and good-will; but the fierce Navajo and Apache from the west, and the no less dreaded Comanche from the east, carried terror and desolation through large districts in the valley. Many villages were deserted, the water-courses became dried up, and the fruitful cornfields returned to their original condition; the lizard, the coyote, and the rattlesnake again assumed possession; and what had been a scene of peace and prosperity, through human depravity had reverted to a wilderness. I myself was soon to act a part in some of the sanguinary tragedies which were at that time of almost daily occurrence.

There had rarely been such an "Indian scare" in the south-west. The Apaches, Navajoes, Nijoras, Yabipias, and other tribes, had dug up the hatchet, and their war-parties rendered travel in the south-west of New Mexico and in Arizona a luxury to be indulged in only at the imminent risk of sudden death. Most fortunate, indeed, would be the lot of the traveller who fell into the hands of these merciless wretches if they at once put him to death. But no one could flatter himself with this expectation. To inflict-

upon their victims the utmost degree of torture of which the human frame is susceptible is to these savages so refined a pleasure, that any one falling into their power could expect nothing else than death at the stake, with all the additions which a fiendish ingenuity could suggest.

From all sides came reports of fresh atrocities. The stage route from the Rio Grande to Ralston in Arizona had been beset by the savages, and along that melancholy track were scattered the graves of eleven hundred of their victims. The settlers in the threatened districts were in hourly dread of attack ; and in the rustle of the wind or the howl of the coyote their excited fancy heard the stealthy approach or the ferocious war-whoops of their enemies.

I had for some years been anxious to make a journey through south-western New Mexico and Arizona ; and in pursuance of this intention, in company with a friend I found myself, after weeks of travel and many adventures, on the Rio Grande del Norte, *en route* for the hunting-grounds of the playful Apaches, who were said "to have blood in their eyes" at sight of a white man. It was a foolhardy expedition, and I marvel that we ever returned with our hair intact to tell the tale of our adventures.

I ask you, gentle reader, to deal leniently with us for the many homicides of which we were guilty. I know you have a partiality for the "noble red man," and regard him as a romantic character ; a little eccentric, perhaps, in his dealings with the "Palefaces" occasionally, but still a fine stage hero, redolent of the prairie and the forest. I merely recount my experiences to amuse you. Let "*Scribitur ad narrandum, non ad probandum,*" be the motto of this book.

We had been camped on the Grande for some days, and during our stay we were objects of considerable interest to our neighbours, who often came over to see the "burros"

(jackasses) that meant to traverse the Indian country when it was overrun with war parties thirsting for white scalps. We made light of the representations of these good people; and if we felt internally any misgivings as to the prudence of our undertaking, we did not allow it to appear. We were especially warned to look out for our "hair" when passing through Cooke's Cañon, which seemed a particularly favourite spot with the savages in which to waylay their victims; and gaily wishing our visitors *adios amigos*, we "saddled up" and left the peaceful valley of the Rio Grande behind us.

Our course shortly lay through the Cañada de Sta. Barbara, in the midst of a rough, undulating country gradually rising towards the west into a range of mountains. A nine-mile ride brought us to a place called La Tenaja, or the Water-jar, where we were rejoiced to see a spring trickling down a ridge of rocks, forming, with its parent source, three wells of pure cold water. In the rainy season, most probably, there is here a picturesque cascade, but at the time of our visit there was very little water falling into the basins.

While watering our mules, we were joined by a very original character. He seemed half-trader, half-trapper; and having heard that we were going south-west, in which direction he also wished to proceed, he gladly availed himself of whatever protection our rifles, in addition to his own, would afford.

During our halt at La Tenaja, the reader must allow me to present to his notice my travelling companion, myself, and our outfit generally. I was really most fortunate in having as comrade so thoroughly "good a fellow" as Will Scott; for that was my friend's name. A keen hunter, an ardent lover of Nature, he was, I may almost say in consequence, a true and sterling friend. He was called, "for short," "the Kid,"

or "the Kidling," to which name he answered with great good humour; and although of so pacific a designation, he was, when occasion required, a lion in the fight. If Will said a thing, he meant it; and although not in the least obstinate in defending his own opinion when he had formed a determination, he might be depended upon for carrying it out. He was a first-rate shot with either gun or rifle; and when he "drew a bead" on bear, antelope, or deer, the crack of his rifle was its death-knell.

As I may be accused of partiality in my description of myself, I will only say that I have always been more remarkable for a love of Nature (and the wilder the better) than for any other quality, and was distinguished by a corresponding inclination for travel and adventure. Many a trip Will and I have made, and some strange things have we seen; but I think we came nearer to our end on this journey than we had ever previously done; and if others wish to know "how near," they had better go over the same ground when next the noble red man is on the war-path.

Our outfit was sufficiently simple. We each had a good riding mule, and we had an old horse, not of much use for anything else, on which we packed the various articles of our equipage. For personal outfit, we wore Kentucky jean pantaloons; high horse-hide boots, into which the ends of the trowsers were tucked; stout knitted woollen shirts; and on our heads we wore Mexican sombreros, heavily ornamented with gold twist. As this may savour of foppery, I will state that we won these hats at a shooting match at Albuquerque on the Rio Grande.

For armament, we each had a fourteen-shot magazine rifle, Winchester's best make; at our hips hung on one side heavy "Colt" pistols, flanked on the other side by useful broad-bladed butcher-knives in cow-hide sheaths. We had

a plentiful supply of bullets, primers, and powder for reloading our cartridge shells. As we did not know how long our journey might be, our baggage was largely composed of ammunition. Indeed, there was little else except sun-dried beef, coffee, salt, and pepper, and some civilized clothes for occasional town wear. For great occasions we had a few tins of preserved vegetables; and carefully wrapped in many a soft flannel fold was hidden away a demijohn of brandy. This was, however, only used as medicine, or at intervals to "correct" the indifferent water we had to drink at the half-dried springs in the deserts.

Our companion was equipped pretty much as we were ourselves. He had two mules—one to ride, and the other, an old grizzled "macho," to carry his "plunder." As he rode, he presented an amusing spectacle, poking forward in the saddle, his knees tucked high up against the mule's shoulders, owing to the shortness of his stirrups. With one hand he led the macho (which frequently would take a playful mouthful of his neighbour's flank between his teeth, occasioning a breach of the peace, and giving rise thereby to much strong language on the part of the trapper); in the other hand he held a heavy, ill-balanced Spencer six-shot carbine—with which, however, the old fellow was "thar" when he fastened his aim on enemy or game.

Just before leaving the water-holes, the trapper (whose name, by the way, was the same as that of a once well-known mountaineer, "Reuben Herring," or "Rube," as he was called for convenience) pointed out close by the water, where the damp ground received the impressions, some "sign" that he did not like. Will and I both examined it carefully, and the more we looked at it the less we liked it. We had little doubt that a party of Indians had been watering their ponies at the spring. This was soon declared a

certainty by Rube, who discovered among the rocks by the middle basin an old moccasin, which he stated to be of Apache manufacture. This gave a certain zest to our position. We wondered where they were and how long they had been gone. Our friend Rube did not know precisely, but "guessed" they had not got further than "Cooke's Cañon;" "and I sorter conclude we'll scare 'em up thar strangers." We began to take an interest in our further proceedings. It was possible that the Apaches had scouts out who had learned our approach, and thus put the whole party in this quarter on the *qui vive* for our arrival. Ten miles further on were the mountains, where, at a place called "Mule Spring," we would have to camp. We re-commenced our march, keeping our eyes well about us; and several times during that ride my heart "jumped into my mouth" as the wind whirled up a cloud of dust in the distance, which to my awakened apprehensions seemed the sudden charge of Indians over a swell or ridge.

The mountains grew gradually nearer, and we scanned their outlines with suspicious eyes. But happily no sign of an enemy was visible. We halted by the spring, which at this time, however, was dry on the surface; and having unpacked the mules, we hoppled them and turned them loose to graze. The poor creatures were half mad with thirst, and crowded about us, interfering with our labours in clearing out the bed of the spring, where, after a little digging, we found a good supply of water. With great difficulty we managed to give each of the animals a drink; and we next proceeded to look after our own wants. In a sheltered nook we made a small fire, and by piling the packs round it we circumscribed the area in which it was visible; pannikins of hot, strong coffee were soon ready, and with tough tortillas and dry beef we soon took the edge off our

appetites. During the ride we had no opportunity of shooting game, though several times we were tantalized with the sight of small herds of graceful antelopes bounding fleetly from our approach. We agreed to take our watches alternately during the night; and I undertook the last, which, being just before daybreak, is the most dangerous, as Indians select that hour for attack. "Old Rube," as Will and I called him, took the first watch; and as we saw him drag his lanky figure cautiously away from the fire-light to take up his station as a vidette a little outside the camp, we both bestowed ourselves in the softest places we could find, and wrapped in our buffalo robes tried to get some sleep. It was in vain, however, that I tried one by one all the usual recipes for inducing slumber. My mind was on the stretch, and visions of prowling Apaches intruded unpleasantly upon my thoughts. The stamp of the mules, an occasional snort, the weird whistle of the intermittent breeze among the rocks and fissures, or the distant, long-drawn howl of the coyote, successively combated my efforts, and it was not until Rube was relieved by Will that I fell into an uneasy doze. I must have been sound asleep, however, for some time, as it seemed but a few minutes after Will had mounted guard when he awoke me. I rose immediately and crept softly out. The fire had burned to a small heap of dull cinders, and was quite invisible when I got outside the breastwork of packs. I stood close to a large dark rock which rose to a considerable height within fifty yards of the camp, and looked with all my powers of scrutiny round the neighbourhood. The moon was falling towards the western horizon, casting vast and vague shadows in the direction from which we had come; a silence almost appalling in its intensity prevailed, not broken even by the usual noises of night in these desert places. In this deep stillness the straining ear

often plays strange tricks with the imagination; noises which have no real existence are counterfeited, and the listener starts as if at an alarm, and with throbbing heart awaits a repetition of the phantom sound. Several times during my vigil I thought I could detect the stealthy tread of moccasined feet; and uncertain of its whereabouts I listened with inconceivable intentness, holding my rifle cocked and ready. The mules, gathered about the old horse, however, stood resting, scarce moving an ear; and this I knew to be a sure sign that no enemy prowled about. There is no animal so watchful as a mule; and long before the traveller, with all his boasted acuteness of ear, can detect the approach of any one, the mule will announce the fact.

The period of my solitary vigil passed slowly by. In the distance a coyote set up a howl, and the hideous wail was taken up far and near. Day was breaking in the east; and seeing the sky becoming tinged with light, I awoke my companions. While cooking our breakfast the sun arose, and poured his level beams over the arid-looking country, which, under their influence, seemed transformed in a most extraordinary manner. An exclamation from Will first drew my attention to the wonderful phenomenon which was now presented to our observation. We knew the neighbourhood was a high barren waste, broken by ridge and rock into a wild semi-mountainous plateau, the general apparent level being preserved, except in the direction in which stood the Sierras, whose summits returned the brilliant glare of the sun. But these now were of gigantic proportions, and seemed to reach to the zenith; here and there they appeared to be cut asunder, sometimes vertically, at others horizontally. At some distance we perceived what we took to be a herd of giraffes stalking along in the stately manner peculiar to these animals; and behind them rose a forest of

colossal trees, their outlines being mirrored in the placid surface of a sparkling lake, which lay immediately in front. Into this the giraffes waded; and, to our astonishment, their shadows, the waves and the spray apparently kicked up by them, which glistened brightly as it fell, were all faithfully pictured! We knew it was the illusion of the mirage; but so real did it all appear that it required an effort to doubt the evidence of our senses. The "giraffes" were represented by our mules, which were browsing by the edge of some scrubby mesquit bushes; and these had been transformed into the glorious tropical forest, which, as the sun ascended the heavens, slowly faded away.

The extreme dryness and elasticity of the air in these upland regions occasions these deceitful representations. On the plains east of the Rocky Mountains the mirage is often seen; but it is in the more elevated regions of New Mexico and Arizona, particularly on the great Madre plateau, that it attains perfection.

When the fairy scene had vanished, we set about catching and packing the mules; and as this operation requires some care and trouble, I will describe the process. The chief requisite of the *mula de carga*, or pack mule, is a square pad of stuffed leather called an *aparejo*, and, roughly speaking, it resembles a book placed "astride" of any object. On the mule's back is first placed a *salea*, or a hand-softened raw sheepskin; this forms a pad, on which is next placed the *xerga*, or saddle-cloth. The aparejo is now put on, and fastened by a broad girth, sometimes made of a kind of grass, which is pulled so tight that the unfortunate animal seems almost cut in two, and under this girthing process groans and grunts in such a manner as to give rise to the impression that the operation is very painful. This, however, is not necessarily the case; and it is on the tightness

of this *chinching* that the comfort of both the mule and its master afterwards depends. The more firmly the aparejo is secured, the less chance the mule will have of chafed sides or galled back; and the master will be spared those ebullitions of temper which the best of us is subject to, if only the requisite amount of exasperation is applied. The packs, or *carga*, are now placed on the aparejo, the weight being equally divided between both sides, and well fastened together with a rope. The whole are then bound together firmly with a strong pack-rope, secured under the mule's belly; and over all is thrown a *petate*, or mat, to protect the carga from rain. When the packing is completed, the *topojos*, or blinkers, are removed from the mule's eyes, and the animal is ready for the trail.

The native Mexican is a born muleteer; and to rise to the distinction of being a *mayor domo* or *capitan* of an *atajo*, or caravan of pack-mules, is the acme of his ambition. These atajos travel on an average some fifteen miles each day. This is the *jornada* for mules laden with from two hundred to three hundred pounds of luggage. Sometimes twelve miles, or even less, constitute a day's work. It is amazing to see the rapidity and dexterity with which a band of eight or ten muleteers will pack and unpack a caravan of perhaps eighty or one hundred mules. When about to start, the *lazo* of the muleteer circles around his head and secures a mule; in an instant the topojos is placed over its eyes; the salea, xerga, and aparejo are put on in a twinkling, the packs secured and the mule ready, all in three minutes. Similar dexterity is shown at the halt. When the packs are removed, they are arranged in regular order, and are covered with the mats or petates. If rain is feared, a trench is dug round the spot to carry off the water.

Just as we were about to leave the spot, I observed a

small band of antelopes about four hundred yards away. I pointed them out to Will, who immediately started towards them, running from one mesquit bush to another. These dwarfed trees grew plentifully, and offered a convenient shelter. Rube and I stood at the camp holding the mules, anxiously awaiting the issue. At length the game began to show some symptoms of suspicion, although the wind, such as there was, blew from them towards the hunter. Judging that he had got near enough to risk a shot, Will crouched under the branches of a thick scrubby mesquit, at about one hundred and fifty yards from the antelopes, which now were crowded together, and sniffed the air, some treacherous eddy having carried the taint to their keen nostrils. They did not appear to be quite sure in what direction the danger lay, and in this uncertainty they alternately turned their inquiring noses to each point of the compass. Will now raised his rifle, and at the crack a fat buck sprang into the air and rolled into the midst of the terrified band, which broke and fled in all directions from the spot, uniting again, however, presently, and scouring away with the speed of the wind. Will's buck remained behind, and leaving me to guard the atajo, Rube started off to bring in a share of the "meat." There was little use in taking much with us, as it would not keep. We therefore packed only the choice portions of the animal, leaving the remainder to the wolves, which already, as if by magic, were loping around the spot awaiting our departure to begin their feast upon the carcass. It is extraordinary to the traveller, who on looking around him can see no sign of animal life, suddenly to perceive a number of wolves spring apparently out of the ground at the report of his rifle. There are two or three species of these creatures frequenting the western country—namely, the large gray or buffalo wolf, the prairie wolf, and the coyote. The latter is

often confounded with the prairie wolf, but in fact it is quite distinct. The true coyote is an inhabitant of north-western Texas, some portions of New Mexico, Arizona, and Mexico proper. The prairie wolf (*canis latrans*) inhabits the great plains and prairies east of the Rocky Mountains, and is a larger animal than the coyote.

We were well pleased with the addition to our supplies furnished by the antelope, which was in prime condition, and must have weighed fully two hundred pounds. There is an unaccountable difference in the size of antelopes. This specimen was a very fine one, but they are frequently shot weighing less than half—that is, less than one hundred pounds—although to all appearance these Lilliputians are as perfectly formed and as old as their heavier comrades.

Having secured the meat (which was cut in thin strips so as to dry *en route*) on our aparejos, we mounted our mules and set out. Our new acquaintance, Rube, was a great acquisition to us. He had a wonderful fund of anecdote illustrative of his many hairbreadth escapes and adventures, and these he never tired of telling round the camp fire whenever we "drew" him on the subject; and we found his recitals so amusing that we seldom passed a camp without getting him to retail them for our edification. I preserved some of the more remarkable of them, and they will be found in this little work, related in the style and language of the old trapper. Subsequent events showed us how fortunate we were in falling in with this old fellow, whose experience and whose six-shooter were equally valuable to us.

From this point we had a choice of routes. We could pass the Sierra de los Mimbres either by Cooke's Cañon or by another depression to the northward, which was reported practicable for mules. Rube said that it was much longer and more difficult than the more direct way through Cooke's

Cañon; but he frankly admitted that the latter route was the more dangerous. After some consultation we decided on risking the cañon, although we could not hide from ourselves the extreme risk we ran of being "jumped" by the Apaches while passing through it. I do not know to what it should be attributed, whether to the extraordinary vigour of body imparted by the pure air of these solitudes, or to a recklessness which is produced by the many dangers to which even the most cautious traveller is exposed; but neither of us thought very much of the probable consequences of passing through this ill-omened gorge, which had during a comparatively short period before the date of our visit seen many a terrible encounter between the skulking Apaches and parties of whites. At this very time the bones of four hundred of these victims to savage hate were strewed along the cañon, appealing to the traveller with mute eloquence to make the best of his way to more secure regions. Near the entrance to the cañon is now situated Fort Cummings, a pleasant little stockaded building erected to overawe the savages; but the latter for some time might more truly be said to have overawed the fort, as the soldiers could not venture away from its protection except in strong parties, and even these moved in constant fear of ambuscades. This famous gorge owes its name to an old gold miner who about the year 1848 discovered the possibility of reaching California by this route. He made two trips and explored the cañon, which on his recommendation became the accepted track to the El Dorado of the West. Cooke's ideas of the most direct way to the gold mines must have been rather indefinite. It was soon discovered that this trail was much longer and ran through more sterile regions than was at all necessary, and it gradually fell into disuse. Those who had availed themselves of it suffered terrible hardships; and for many, alas!

it was a road fated to lead to the next world. We were, of course, aware of the terrible interest which hung over this gloomy pass, and as we perceived Cooke's peak towering above the lesser summits of the range our pulses beat quicker, and I at any rate began to think that we might have selected a better route. However, I said nothing, and we shortly drew near the entrance, where the valley narrowed as it became enclosed between the wild-looking mountains. We rode in silence, each seeming to feel the weight of a presentiment of danger. An ominous sign was the freshly made trail of Apache ponies, which Rube declared could not have been made many hours. Here and there we perceived bunches of grass tied up in a particular manner, and all pointing in the same direction. These were, no doubt, signals arranged by the savages to convey some intelligence to their passing parties, but of what nature we could not guess: These symptoms of the presence of the Apaches deepened our sense of uneasiness. Our eyes were incessantly searching the outlines of the cliffs, or the brush-covered ledges, in expectation of seeing their skulking forms waiting to ambush us; but they were invisible. Once within the cañon, the sandstone walls towering on either side, we felt as if we had voluntarily placed ourselves in a trap from which there was no retreat. High above rose the tremendous cliffs, limiting the light of day; and in the gloomy pass below, oppressed with a feeling of being buried in the bowels of the earth, we struggled onwards over the rugged track, which here and there was encumbered with huge masses of the crags which had fallen from the summits on either side. Some of these were as large as cathedrals, and we had to turn aside from the direct way in order to avoid them. The sharp ring of the iron-shod feet of the mules echoed from cliff to cliff, and was repeated a hundred times with appalling distinctness.

VIEW FROM ENTRANCE OF COOKE'S CANON. Page 62.

We feared the noise would reach the ears of enemies on the summit and betray our presence. We frequently passed the skeletons of mules and men who had paid with their lives for their temerity in venturing through this pass, which, I believe, each of us was beginning to regard as little better than the entrance to an Inferno.

The thread of sky which we could distinguish overhead grew gradually fainter as the height of the cliffs increased, and we could tell from the crimson flush of the heavens that the sun was about setting. We therefore hurried forward in order to clear the cañon before darkness fell, as the prospect of passing a night within its terrific jaws, a target perhaps for the rifles of the savages aloft in case of their discovering us, was not to be entertained.

We had accomplished about half the entire length of the cañon—that is, about two miles—when suddenly an appalling yell rang through the air, reverberating from cliff to cliff. We instantly halted, while our hearts beat wildly. Looking upwards we could discern against the heavens, which still glowed with the reflections of the sunset, the figures of savages standing by the dizzy verge of the abyss; and at the same instant a vast block of sandstone, detached by them, for a moment seemed to totter on its base and then fell forward. There was a fascination in the spectacle which rooted me to the spot. I felt as if I could not move. With a wild exclamation old Rube seized my mule by the bridle, and wrenching her round, set spurs to his own animal and fled. I heard a roaring sound, as if a mighty wind were rushing through a forest; and then followed a tremendous shock, which seemed to shake the earth, accompanied by a bright flash that lighted up the gorge, and a terrible reverberation, which was repeated and magnified by the echoes of the cañon. Our mules were wild with terror, and flew over the

boulders amid crags and rocks in a perfectly ungovernable panic. Up above we heard the fierce shouts of the savages, whose rifles now began to crack, and the bullets striking the rocks obliquely, whizzed past with a vicious sound. At a place where the cañon narrowed, another enormous mass of rock fell close in front of us, causing our mules to rear back with such suddenness that Rube, who was leading, lost his balance and was thrown to the ground. He was on his feet in an instant, however, and while holding his struggling mule by the head, his keen, quick eyes were cast about the spot in search of cover.

Most fortunately we were brought to a stop at a place where the rocks at one side were hollowed out as if eroded by the action of a torrent, and the cliff beetled forward above this recess, thus offering a secure protection against attacks from overhead. Here we stood crowded together. We ranged the mules one behind the other, and hoppled their legs, in order to secure them against a stampede; and having placed them as far as possible out of harm's way, we crouched among the huge boulders, which formed a natural breastwork in front of our position. We were in a capital situation for defence, and we listened intently for some indication of the whereabouts of the Apaches, each moment expecting to see them charging up the pass. The silence was unbroken except by the heavy breathing and stamping of the mules, which were "blown" and excited with their quick stampede; and already the growing twilight of the cañon was beginning to render objects vague and undistinguishable at a little distance. An hour passed in this state of uncertainty, and during this time we neither saw nor heard anything of the savages. Will and I grew impatient at the delay.

"Yer needn't fret," observed Rube; "they'll come. They know they've run us into a nice trap, and you bet they ain't

a-goin' to let so much plunder slide 'ithout comin' to take it, or leastways a-tryin'."

We prepared ourselves for the attack by putting every cartridge into the magazines of our rifles they would hold, and loosening the knives and pistols in our belts. It was a terrible position, and we awaited its further developments with a sickening anxiety. This cañon is only four miles in length, and from the delay of our enemies we began to suspect that they had divided, and that a party would approach our position from both sides. Night was now casting her sombre shade over the scene, investing every object with a doubtful form, which added to the difficulty of detecting the advance of the savages, whose prowling figures were often counterfeited by rocks or bushes. From where we were posted we fortunately were able to command the pass both up and down: Will kept his eye in the latter direction, while Rube and I, with our rifles cocked, passed each dark uncertain object in review, ready to fire.

"They cannot be coming, Rube," I said at length. "They have now had plenty of time to be here from both ends of the cañon; and as they have not come, I fancy they have gone away."

"Don't yer go for to think any sich nonsense," replied the trapper. "Them varmints air about us somewheres though we can't see 'em; they'll show, you may stake high, an' soon enough at that."

We had not long to wait. While still doubting whether the Apaches were in the cañon, I stole quietly out of our retreat, and taking advantage of the cover offered by each rock or boulder, I advanced down the pass, listening every few yards for any sounds which might indicate the approach of the enemy. I was about to venture a little further, when the clink of a piece of shingle struck upon my ear, and

peering intently in the direction of the noise, I could just perceive through the darkness several Indians swiftly skulking from rock to rock, and pausing frequently, apparently to discover at what precise point of the pass we were hidden. Stooping to the ground, I bounded back to my companions, but not before I was discovered. A terrific yell told us of the fact, and from both sides of our position arrows and bullets rattled around us. The breastwork of rock which fronted us formed an admirable defence, and the volley produced no effect beyond wounding one of the mules, which kicked and plunged so much as to terrify the others, and we had great difficulty in preventing them from rushing out into the cañon. The most frightful war-whoops, echoing and reëchoing a thousand times from the lofty walls of the pass, seeming to proceed from the throats of demons thirsting for our destruction, as indeed was actually the case, announced that the crisis was at hand. There appeared to be a considerable number of the savages in the pass, but as yet we had not fired a single shot, reserving our cartridges until certain of our aim.

Indians are easily cowed if their first assault is unsuccessful; and they have a maxim among them very useful to the traveller—that "it is better to lose ten enemies than one warrior." We therefore hoped, by keeping our fire until they were close upon us, to kill a considerable number with our repeating rifles before they gained access to our place of refuge. This was indeed our sole hope of escape, as in a hand-to-hand encounter they would outnumber us ten to one. We let them approach nearer and nearer; when finding no opposition they became bolder, and no longer prowled and skulked among the rocks, but advanced swiftly in a somewhat disorderly body. We could dimly see their figures by the faint light reflected downwards from the upper cliffs,

which yet returned the fading gleam of the sky. Letting them come within fifty yards, we began to fire through the interstices of the rocks. Clearly those Indians knew little of the rapidity with which the "Spencer" and "Winchester" could deal death. Our fire was tremendous, and dark as it was we could see many dusky figures lying motionless upon the ground. This gave them a lesson, and they now seemed glad to find cover behind the rocks. The body which had come down the cañon having only the fire from Will to contend with, had made a lodgment very near our position, and from these we suffered considerable annoyance, as their bullets hissed past our ears and clapped loudly on the rocks close to our heads.

There now ensued a pause, and we began to fear from this sudden quiet that the savages were concerting a simultaneous rush to force us to a hand-to-hand conflict; in which case it would be all over with us. Rube crawled on all-fours between the rocks in front to reconnoitre, and we could just see him raise his rifle, and at the same moment a stream of flame shot from the muzzle, while a wild shriek from the cañon announced that the shot was not in vain.

A death-like silence followed. "That was a ventursome varmint," said Rube as he crawled back again to rejoin us; "but I guess he's rubbed out, and I feels a'most sartain he's one of their big bugs. Load up and be ready for 'em in case they makes a rush; our only chance is to keep 'em out o' hyar."

We strained our senses to ascertain what the savages were about, but not a sound reached us. An hour passed, and then another, and still the attack was not made. We began to gather hope as the night passed by; but the time went slowly, as may well be supposed. At length dawn appeared, streaking the slip of sky high overhead, and as the light

strengthened we ventured out from our refuge and took a careful view of the pass. Not an enemy was in sight, but bloody traces of the struggle were abundant. The stones and rocks were sprinkled with gore, and there were many bows lying about which had been dropped by the dead or wounded and lost in the darkness. There were no bodies to be seen. These had without doubt been carried off by the survivors to secure them from being scalped; which operation Rube would not have failed to perform. Indians believe that the soul of a warrior who has lost his scalp does not enter the happy hunting-grounds. Hence their eagerness to save those of their friends and to take those of their enemies.

Finding that the savages had really gone, we got out the mules and proceeded on our way, keeping a sharp look-out along the cliff summits, fearful of another attack. We could not account for the sudden disappearance of the Indians, except by supposing that Rube's last shot had killed the chief of the band; and that this, as well as the heavy loss which they had suffered in the assault, had cowed them. We were well pleased to be quit of them so cheaply. We had incurred no other loss than that of the mule, which was badly wounded, and we killed the animal ourselves, not to protract its sufferings.

On passing out of the upper end of the cañon we took a northerly course for about sixteen miles, and thence crossed the plain through which runs the Rio Mimbres, directing ourselves towards the Burro Mountains. In this plain we found a depression or cañada, covered with fine pasturage, and we followed this for four or five miles down a slight incline, which brought us to that bright and sparkling river. Will was a disciple of the "gentle art," and here his talents had full scope. With a stick cut from a cotton-wood tree, a piece of string and a hook, baited with a long-legged insect

found in the grass, he landed a beautiful trout at the very first cast. Soon the bank was covered with the most lovely fish; and as we were in need of breakfast, these delicately-flavoured trout were shortly hissing in the pan, and were thence transferred "hot and hot" to three very capacious receptacles within our persons. The waters of the Rio Mimbres flow over a gravelly bed, and hence the flavour of the fish is excellent and the flesh firm. The banks are clothed with a luxuriant growth of cotton-wood trees and sycamores; and the contrast with the brown deserts we had passed, offered by the pure limpid stream with its overarching foliage, was most refreshing. On the bosom of this beautiful river floated hundreds of wild ducks and teal, which rose in large flocks at our approach. Some miles below the point where we struck the stream was situated a little Mexican town, containing three or four hundred inhabitants. I say "*was* situated," because it has had an intermittent existence; now sacked and depopulated by the fierce savages, and again springing into life after the lapse of a few years. For aught I know it may not now exist. The valley of the Rio Mimbres is blessed with a most fertile soil; and it is to this circumstance that the successive reappearances of the "city" are due. We were much struck by the extraordinary natural formations in the neighbourhood. These resemble pillars, obelisks, pyramids, chimneys, tables, mushrooms, altars, etc., and consist of vast masses of sandstone. They strike the beholder with astonishment at the resemblance they bear to man's handiwork; and yet these are far inferior in this respect to other similar works of nature in this strange land. We spent a considerable time among these wonderful results of erosion and denudation, examining them from every point of view; and at length we had to tear ourselves away, with our curiosity only half satisfied, at

Rube's reiterated summons. The old fellow either had no eye for the quaint and picturesque, or had long since become accustomed to all the marvels the country had to show. If he could have surrounded these monuments with a high wall, and charged visitors half a dollar a head for inspection, his interest in them would probably have been awakened.

Leaving the river, a ride of some six miles brought us to the well-known "Ojo Caliente," or Hot Spring. The mound surrounding this well is about fifty feet in height, and is clearly due to the limestone deposit formed by the water during a vast number of ages. The well is about twelve feet deep, and has a diameter of about the same extent. The scientific Will had a thermometer among his possessions, and this instrument, if it spoke the truth, gave the spring a temperature of 126° Fahrenheit.

While standing round the well commenting on its heat, bubbles, and other properties, our mules suddenly set up a loud braying; and looking downwards, to our dismay we perceived a band of about twenty Apaches coming over the plain towards us as fast as their ponies could carry them. Old Rube uttered an exclamation not to be found in the catechism, and we started for the mules, to prevent them from being stampeded. We were just in time, as the yells and thundering hoof-beats of the savage cavalry were beginning to upset the sedateness of our animals. We quickly hoppled them, arranged them in a triangle, and got inside, each of us defending one side of our improvised fortification. The Indians, who were now about four hundred yards off, stopped, and seemed to be considering the chances of the attempt. Rube scornfully called to them in Spanish that if they wanted our scalps they might "come and take them." This information they answered with wild and demon-like yells, and some of them commenced circling

round us tentatively, to ascertain if there was any point at which they might venture an attack. But on each side they beheld the cold gleam of a rifle barrel, grimly silent, and yet eloquent of caution. There was one savage who, from his splendid Navajo horse and the deference paid to his gestures by his companions, we inferred to be the chief. This fellow I determined to "drop" if he ventured a little nearer. Apparently emboldened by our passive demeanour, they became more venturesome, and levelled many gibes and taunts at our cowardice in not coming out to meet them. We paid no heed to these sarcasms on our valour, but waited our opportunity. As they kept constantly moving round us, the radius of the circle they described became gradually more and more contracted. Soon the four hundred yards of distance became reduced to three hundred, and setting my sights for this range, I "got the dead drop" on the chief, aiming slightly in front of him to allow for his pace. At the report he threw up his arms and fell headforemost over the front of his saddle. A terrific yell followed the shot and the fall of the chief, and the whole band, with frantic shouts of rage, charged towards us.

"Now, steady thar," exclaimed Rube; "a shot wasted may mean a scalp lost. Each o' yer take a skunk and let him have it in the hump ribs." A few seconds brought the party within two hundred yards, and we began to "pump" our bullets into them with such good effect that out of every five shots at least three emptied saddles. When almost close up to us they swerved to the right, and rode off with the speed of the wind. And now we beheld a fine feat of savage horsemanship. Each Indian as he retired passed by the body of a fallen comrade, and stooping to the ground as he swept past at full speed, lifted the body with apparent ease and threw it in front of him on the saddle. Bearing their

dead and wounded beyond our reach, they vanished over the swell as quickly as they had come, leaving us to draw a long breath of relief. We had begun well in our Indian fighting, having already "rubbed out" two chiefs and a considerable number of braves and warriors.

Round the Ojo Caliente there are three hot and steaming streams which trickle down the mound. This would form a most eligible site for a bathing establishment, and the genius of the Yankee in pursuit of the "almighty dollar" has by this time most probably discovered and utilized the fact.*

* There is now, or was some time since, a house of this description here, built by the principal proprietor of the Pinos Altos Mines, Mr. Virgil Mastin, and the spot bids fair to be a fashionable resort some day.

CHAPTER III.

HOT SPRING—BEAR HUNT—RUBE'S FIRST EXPERIENCES OF THE WILD WEST—THIRST MADNESS—ILLUSIONS OF THE MIRAGE—BURRO MOUNTAINS—SPLENDID PROSPECT—WILL AND THE BEAR—DEATH OF AN INDIAN SCOUT.

We had been anxious to inspect the Ojo Caliente; but our adventure there naturally produced a desire for change of scene, and we therefore lost no time in unhoppling the mules and starting towards the Burro or Jackass Mountains. I was beginning to think this name indicative of a suitable destination for at least two travellers of the party, who had no other excuse than curiosity to plead in extenuation of their presence in the country.

Proceeding towards the mountains, we passed another fine spring, somewhat less than three miles distant from the Ojo Caliente, nourishing by its fertilizing waters a little grove of tall cotton-wood trees. This was also a hot spring, but much cooler than that we had left. We at first determined to remain at this spot for the night; but on second thoughts we started again, in the hope of falling in with a cold spring. We filled our *xuages* and water-kegs, however, in case of disappointment, and left this pleasant little oasis in the brown desert with a certain amount of regret. After a weary ride of about eighteen miles we reached a line of cotton woods mingled with willows; and as these are pretty sure indications of the presence of water, we set to work

with our solitary pickaxe (which Old Rube had packed among his "plunder" to aid in his ceaseless search for gold); and after some little digging we were gratified to perceive water oozing into the excavation we were making. We thus procured a plentiful supply both for ourselves and the mules, which by this time were badly in need of water, and were braying loudly round us as soon as they smelt the grateful liquid. We spent a rather restless night, although we took it in turns to watch. Our late encounters with the savages had rather unstrung our nerves, and consequently we slept with the consciousness that at any moment we might be called upon to spring to our arms and fight for our lives. It is not the danger of an actual encounter that preys on the system—that is soon over, and the excitement attending it seems to brace rather than to relax the nerves—but it is the constant expectation, the endless apprehension of an attack at any moment that produces this very unpleasant sensation of depression. On our way to this place we rode for five miles through a grove of splendid cacti, attaining a general height of fifteen feet, though many were fully twenty feet in height. Scattered about among them I perceived an occasional yucca or "Spanish bayonet," its lofty stem giving variety to the vegetation, which at this place was of a more exclusively Mexican character than any that I had as yet seen. I was much struck with the abundance of a kind of grouse, here called Gila quail, among the cactus groves. Any one possessed of a shot-gun could have indulged his inclination for slaughter to his heart's content. As we rode along, immense flocks rose before us and flew off with a loud noise, offering an opportunity for splendid sport. We had no time, however, on this occasion to stop; and as we were armed with rifles, we could only have shot a few sitting birds for the pot.

The next morning we were thrown into a state of excitement by discovering the tracks of a bear near our camp. Rube, who was a first-rate tracker, started on the trail, and leaving Will to guard the mules, I accompanied the trapper. The sign led towards a little ravine which we shortly came to, and which led up into the mountains. At one spot here, where some water trickled down over the rocks, there were many indications of the presence of game. We detected the round pads of cougars, as well as the traces of antelopes, deer, wolves, and bears. The track we were running led through these, and the skill of Rube was finely exemplified by the masterly manner in which he picked it out from among the others and led it towards a clump of willows which fringed the dry bed of a stream. We gave this a wide berth, so as not to alarm the bear in case he lay concealed among them. Finding that the tracks were not to be discovered leading out on any side of this small brake, we next determined to go in and wake him up. We returned to the trail and followed it carefully step by step. Rube led and I followed close behind, with my rifle ready cocked in case the old trapper did not disable the fierce animal with his first shot. Carefully lifting aside the branches of the willows, we noiselessly wound our way between them, and after proceeding in this manner for about twenty yards, we stopped to reconnoitre. Just as we did so, a deep snarling growl stopped the beating of our hearts for an instant, and made these organs perform the mysterious feat of "jumping into our mouths." Unlike the trapper of the books, we did not exactly know what to do, but stood still and looked at each other. "He's a-goin' to burst out," said Rube; and in truth he was, for at the same instant a huge shaggy beast with long brownish-yellow hair, and a terrible array of white teeth shown off to advantage by a red tongue, appeared like

magic charging at us through the willows, sending us to the right-about ingloriously. I did not stop until I reached the outside of the patch of willows. Old Rube seemed rather crestfallen at this undignified retreat, and I suggested that he should go in again, as clearly the brute was within. The old fellow was nothing loath, and feeling rather ashamed of ourselves we ventured in a second time. We knew the bear would be on the watch for us now, and "have his hair up;" but we each determined to show the other that he was not afraid, and on we went gallantly. On this occasion the fates were more propitious to us. We perceived the bear eying us from a small open spot in the centre of the thicket, and we both fired together. The distance being only about ten yards, and the mark sufficiently visible, it need not surprise the reader to learn that the bear fell over very dead indeed. Rube looked more like the "ideal trapper" than any one I had seen, as he drew his sheath-knife and proceeded to flay the carcass. I returned to the camp for two mules—one to carry myself, and the other, old Rube's macho, to carry in the hide and the best portions of the meat, as well as his lanky owner.

I found Will at the camp on my return, faithful to his duty as guard; and, before setting out for the willow thicket again, I gave him a description of our terrible encounter with the cinnamon bear (to which variety the animal belonged), drawing a frightful picture of the dangers to which we had been exposed, and of course passing over our inglorious flight.

Rube had the hide off when I got back, and was sitting on the blood-stained carcass, wiping the perspiration off his face with the sleeve of his hunting-shirt. "This hyar location air 'tarnal hot, pardner," he observed; "and if any one proposes an adjournment to cooler diggin's, I'll second it."

We hoisted the skin and the hams on the macho, and having secured them there to his satisfaction, Rube craned up his long length to the saddle, and we set out for camp not dissatisfied with our adventure.

We found everything right under the able custody of Will, who, never having previously seen and handled a raw bear-hide, afforded the old trapper considerable amusement by a display of curiosity. The fire was soon replenished, the coffee set on it to boil, a bear-ham frizzled and sputtered; and at this very exhilarating spectacle old Rube grew unusually genial, and gave us *ex suo proprio motu* an account of one of his first experiences in the wild West.

"Yer knows," he began, looking at us over a steaming pannikin of coffee, "that thar air places in these hyar U-nited States whar thar ain't nothin' to be seen 'cept salt, alkali at that, for miles and miles." We signified acquiescence. "Wal, it is o' that blamed stuff I am a-goin' to tell yer. I hed been trappin' on the North Platte, and hed made a fair pile o' pelts, when somethin' as weren't for my good put an idee into my head that I would do better on the Green River. Wal, I picked up my traps and started. Now I hed heerd o' the Bitter Creek country, but at that time I hedn't ever been thar; and I sorter concluded that the boys who made so much out o' what they hed suffered thar were only pilin' up the agony jest to tickle a tenderfoot, as I hev no doubt many thort me to be at that time. I guess I soon found out that they didn't lie.

"When I fust kem to whar I could see the alkali plain, I thort 'twur the ocean, and then I thort it wur not that eyther. Howesever, I pushed on. My old mule couldn't make it out nohow. She fust put down her head and sniffed, and then not likin' the smell nor yet the sight, the critter wanted to make back tracks. I spurred her on though, thinkin' I'd soon get

out o' the white salty plain, as I seed a fine row o' trees appearin' at what I took to be a couple o' miles out. I whipped up and made the mule get on pretty quick; but I guess I hed to give that up—the dust the old critter kicked up a'most choked me. I did not mind it very much then though, as o' coorse I thort I'd be out of the pizenous place as soon as I struck the timber I could see in front. But I soon began to think I were getting no nearer to it: the farther on I went, the farther off the trees would go; and I now seed that they weren't the kind o' trees I hed been used to. There were palms and all sich sort o' timber as grows down Vera Cruz, 'way in Mexico, and I guessed there were no sich trees anywheres near Green River. I were beginnin' to feel that 'twere an unwholesome place I'd got into, when suddenly thar appeared a beautiful lake right in front, and the shadders o' the trees was plain to be seed, and the waves were rollin' in-shore at my side, while the water at the far-off bank were calm as glass ice. Thar were deer and buffler and a'most all kinds of animals walkin' about, and some o' 'em seemed to be drinkin' the blue ripplin' water. 'This,' says I to myself,—'this is raal handy now. I am dry as powder, and my old mule is too, and this hyar lake couldn't hev come at any time more welcome.' The mule seed the water too; and I must tell yer, strangers, we was both on us most powerful dry arter all the alkali dust we'd been swallerin' all day. The critter made good time torst the lake; but we couldn't get near it nohow. It flitted and sparkled and invited us on like; and the more we tried to reach it the less chance we hed o' doin' it. My face were burnin', as if a hot iron hed been passed clost over the skin; my eyes were blistered and sore; and the way that dry, fine dust made 'em sweat were somethin' to see, you bet. And still I held on, ever follering the lake, ever

seein' the deer and the buffler drinkin', and even walkin' through the water. I could see the splashes they made as they waded through it. And so the day passed, and the night kem down; and durin' all the long hours in the ghostly moonlight I rode on and on. Strangers, I began to think I were mad. My brain seemed on fire now, and I hardly knew whether I were Rube Herring still alive, or whether I hedn't died and were condemned to wander for ever in search of water. My tongue were so swelled it felt too thick for my mouth; and drops o' blood fell from my lips on to my huntin' shirt.

"And when the sun rose I were clean 'mazed, for all o' a sudden the lake, the trees, the deer, and buffler I hed seed afore were vamosed clur and clean away—there wa'n't a sight o' 'em to be seed; and in their place what shed I see but the towers and spires and houses o' a great city! Wal, I *were* glad. 'That blamed lake air gone the way it kem,' says I; 'but I guess hyar's a place where I kin get a drink anyhow:' and at that I poked up the mule a bit faster, and the critter put out like a quarter hoss; for I guess she seed the town too, and knew that thar she'd get water. On we went, and though at first I hed my fears that the town might not stand for us, I were soon right glad to see we were comin' nearer. But I guess there were some p'ints about it that puzzled me. I couldn't see a human critter anywheres around. Thar were no hosses a-comin' and a-goin', nor were thar any smokes. 'They're all off on a holiday,' thort I; 'but I reckon there'll be enough o' 'em behint to give me and my critter a drink.' When I got 'ithin hef a mile I pulled up short. 'It's a ruined town, and thar's no humans in it.' This is what I said to myself. Thar were walls around it—walls built as regular, seemin'ly, as ever I seed. Thar were huge houses with domes over 'em for roofs, churches with

steeples, castles, towers, battlements, all complete, but yet like nary a town as ever I seed. I went on, thinkin' thar must be a well—that no sich town would be built whar thar wa'n't no water. Strangers, when I got up I seed how I'd been fooled. 'Twere no town. 'Twere all sandstone rocks worn by time and weather, jest like them we were a-lookin' at t'other day; and thar wa'n't a well nor a drop o' water in the hull place, nor ever hed a-been. Wal, I don't mind sayin' that I sot thar on my mule and cried. I hed been ridin' for the most part o' forty hours; and now ag'in the sun were fallin' torst the west, and threw the long shadders o' the steeples and towers eastwards over the plain. I rode away. I guess thar wa'n't no use in stayin'. I wandered all the night long, and seed the moon make faces at me and jump about the sky every which way. And I seed the dry bones o' men lyin' on the ground. Their skulls grinned at me, and I thort I heerd 'em a-shoutin that I was soon to lie thar too. I thort I heerd them arter me, cryin' that I shed not go from 'em; and the dry scrapin' o' thur withered feet in the sand med my blood run cold; while I tried to shout to my mule to get on, and beat her with my quirt. I must hev been mad, strangers; and the queerest thing is I knew at the time I were mad, and yet I bleeved them things all the same.

"I rode all night from these dead bones, and then when day were a-breakin' I heerd another nize I knew full well—'twere the wail o' the wolves gatherin' for prey. The critters hev their signals when they wants help, and I heerd the cries answered and comin' nearer; and then I knew they were arter *me*. The moon were westerin' and fallin' very low, and the wild white plain were shinin' like a sheet o' snow, and on it I could see the black specks in the distance flockin' torst me—them were wolves. Thar's not a many critters in the land hev the sense o' wolves: they knows when their

game is weakly and likely to fall into their clutches; so you never sees a wolf arter a critter in sound wind and limb. I reckon they knew I were a'most played out, and my old mule too, and that's why they kem arter us. The mule knew she hed better be movin', and as the howl o' the wolves kem over the plain, she shook like a leaf and started at full speed. But the poor beast were too weak, and I as well. We jest plodded on, fast we thought, fur 'twere as fast as we could go, but precious slow, you bet, when we hed wolves behint us. It wa'n't long till I heerd the hungry whimpers o' the wolves clost up, then two on 'em shot out on eyther side in front, and jumped up at the mule's throat. The poor thing gave a fearsome scream and stummelled. Afore she could reckiver herself, more o' the pisenous critters seized holt o' her, and down she kem! I were throwed o' coorse, and were right in the middle o' the pack. But I guess I got new life into me at sight o' death so awful and so near; and with my pistols and bowie-knife I med through 'em a-snarlin' and a-yowlin' as they were, and struck out for the plain. The wolves stuck by the mule until they finished her, and then a few o' the cussed varmints follered me. I dropped one now and ag'in when they kem too near, and before long the others took away over the desert at a cry that kem floating up on the wind. I reckon 'twere a signal like the one I'd heerd already when they hed comed arter the mule and me.

"All night I wandered on. I felt like one in a dreadful dream. All around I thort I seed skeletons beckonin' me onward. Whatever way I looked, thar they were grinnin' wi' their teeth shinin' bare an' white in the moonlight, and their long, bony arms p'intin' out the way. The moon grew red, and then I thort I wur a-wadin' through a sea o' blood, and on the top were skulls bobbin' up and down, all seemin' to say, 'Your turn is jest come.' I guess I must

hev fainted about then, for I disremember anything else till I felt the deadly cold, and woke jest as day were clearin'. 'Twere a fearsome wakenin', strangers! All about were that frightful whity-coloured plain; and when I got up and tried to walk I staggered like a drunken man. And as the sun clomb the sky, thar were the cool, green forests right in front, and thar was the cool, blue lake with waves ripplin' ashore so plain that I seemed to hear their splashin'. I went on and on all day, now fallin' and now reelin' forward. I felt that I hed to give in, and that I might as well die thar as anywhere else. I were a-goin' to throw myself down, when far away I seed a small band o' antelope. I knew they wouldn't stay long from water, and if I could only foller 'em I might find out whar it was. I went on torst 'em, and then they trotted off, but very slow, like as if they guessed I didn't want to do them a hurt. I follered on and on for many weary miles, as it seemed to me, and torst sundown I seed peaks wi' snow upon 'em rising over the plain. Strangers, I can't tell yer what I felt when I seed them hills. I knew that water were thar; but how I got thar I doesn't know. I s'pose I kep' the track o' the antelopes onknown to myself. The moon were shinin' ag'in when I struck the timber at the foot o' the range, and behint the brush I heerd the dancin' and the gurglin' o' water over rocks. I staggered on and fell clost by the edge and drank. Thar's things in most men's lives they don't ever forget—I reckon that in mine the findin' o' this water were one. I were so far gone I fainted arter drinkin'; and how long I lay I doesn't rightly know. When I kem to, the sun were up, and high at that. I got up, how stiff and weak I needn't tell yer. Jest then I seed a deer come lopin' down a path to the water. I hed my pistols still, and by the greatest luck I killed him. I drank the blood hot from the carcase, and it put some strength

in me. All that day I stayed by the deer, eatin' and drinkin' between spells o' sleepin', and I soon began to come round. Thar's no use in tellin' yer how I stayed thar for a week, and hevin' killed another fat buck I had strength enough to make a start for somewheres. Three days out from this place I fell in with a carryvan o' emigrant folk makin' for Califurny, and once wi' them I were safe enough. Strangers, that's all."

During this extraordinary narrative Rube never once paused. He seemed to act the scenes over again; and across the fire we could see the excited gleam of his eye and the convulsive twitches of his muscles as he detailed the more distressing portions of his adventure. He held us by a kind of fascination. We felt he was telling us the truth, and with this consciousness our blood thrilled with the recital of horrors endured by the actual narrator. Adventures such as this, unreal as they undoubtedly seem, were not very uncommon a few years ago. In some portions of the wild western country, where these deserts are of large extent, any one, whose curiosity is sufficiently strong, at the present day can try the effect of getting lost or "turned round," and experience for himself these very sensational adventures. After having had the "thirst madness" on him, such a one will admit that old Rube did not exaggerate in his descriptions.

When we had finished our breakfast, we packed the mules and started. The Burro Mountains deceive the approaching traveller into the idea that they are of slight elevation, and offer but little impediment to his course. On a nearer inspection, however, he perceives that this effect is produced by high and extensive swells in the plain, which intercept his vision and only permit the summits of the hills to be visible. The crest of these undulations reached, the moun-

tains, a wild and rugged chain, rise abruptly at some distance and present a formidable barrier to his further progress. We were considerably surprised with this feature in the physical conformation of the country; but any disappointment or difficulty was amply compensated for by the glorious prospect which lay extended to our gaze when at length we reached the summit of the chain. Far to the south, reaching away beyond our utmost vision, and stretching into Mexico, lay peaks and rugged ranges, abrupt and isolated, and probably unnamed as yet, springing high aloft from the great table-land of the Madre plateau, which in its vastness, wildness, and broken outlines seemed a tumultuous ocean turned to earth and stone. Towards the south-east we recognized the gentler forms of the Florida mountains; and rising far beyond we caught sight of that curious range the Sierra de Organos, upon whose crest lies the lake which ebbs and flows like the ocean, and on whose steep sides are ranged those vast flute-like rocks which, from their resemblance to the pipes of an organ, have given the name to these hills. How clear the air in these solitudes! These peaks were upwards of one hundred miles distant from us, and yet we could distinctly trace their strange configuration through the great interval. Looking back upon our course, we beheld Cooke's Peak towering upwards in the pellucid air, seemingly quite close; and the entrance to the pass (Palmer's), which we at first meant to travel by, was as clearly visible as if we could touch its portals with the hand. Somewhat northwards rose the Sierra de los Mimbres, those sparkling peaks of selenite which have looked down on many a wild deed done by savage Navajo or Apache; and farther towards the direct line north we could see the Santa Rita and Pinos Altos mountains, as well as the snow-tipped summits of perhaps the least known and wildest chain in the United

States, the Sierra de Mogollon, whose sides are clothed with heavy forests, and whose ravines are even yet the paradise of hunters.

We stood here upon the crest of the "divide," which on the west sheds its waters to the Pacific Ocean. Our further course for many miles lay mapped out before us, and we little relished the prospect, for fully forty miles of sterile desert intervened between the foot of the chain on which we stood and the Peloncello Mountains, whose giant ridges hemmed in the plain on the west. Over their tops we could discern, at what seemed an infinite distance, the dome-like summit of Mount Graham and the more slender points of the Dos Cabezas, which shoot up from the Pina Leño range. The eye seemed to pass high above these far-off summits; and in fact the position from which we viewed them was at a much higher elevation over sea-level. The general lie of the country was towards the west, and the slope was very appreciable to the far-distant and invisible Pacific.

Two miles from the summit of a pass which led down to the western plain, we found a beautiful clear spring of water, which rose from under a high overhanging rock. From this spring trickled a rill or small stream, which flowed down the cañon. We followed it for a little way, but owing to the insuperable obstacles formed by great blocks of stone which had fallen into its bed from the sides and summits of the cliffs, we had to turn aside and again avail ourselves of it at some distance lower down. Here, strange to say, the stream had vanished, absorbed probably by the porous, thirsty soil. As the cañon approached the plain all traces of fertility disappeared, and at its mouth it was simply a dry desert valley. At its upper portions it is almost choked with a beautiful and varied vegetation, comprising evergreen oaks of a kind I had not seen before, resembling hollies,

sycamores, cedars, black walnuts, as well as the rough-barked cedar. There were the usual piñons or nut pines, cactus of several varieties, and beautiful acacias, cypresses, and mesquits. We were not pleased to note a very plain Indian trail which wound down the pass. It seemed fresh, and we began again to feel that insecurity which is destructive of the pleasure which the traveller would otherwise experience in exploring these interesting wilds.

While in the cañon we saw abundant evidences of the presence of game. Deer tracks were numerous, as were also those of bears and of that mischievous little animal the beaver. Many trees had been cut down by these creatures, and the little stream was obstructed by the clever workers, whose lodges dotted a pond formed by the damming back of the water. Notwithstanding that Indian "sign" was fresh, Will was unable to resist the temptation of having a shot at one of these as we came suddenly within view of the site of their operations. Two were engaged in steering a log towards the dam, and at the crack of the rifle one of the beavers subsided almost without a struggle. It is said that beavers work only by night; but probably the extremely sequestered nature of this settlement had encouraged these fellows to be abroad in daylight. The shot disturbed great flights of quail, of which I observed that there were two varieties. Hares and squirrels were very abundant, and altogether this cañon seemed a very desirable retreat for a hunter.

While forcing our way down the pass among the tangled thickets we suddenly heard a loud snort, and at the same instant the heavy rustling of some large animal making away through the brushwood. Will started in pursuit, leaving Rube and me to take charge of his mules. We continued our descent of the cañon, and it was not until we reached the point where, as has already been said, the trail

leads out of it to avoid the almost impenetrable brushwood and large rocks which choked the gorge, that we stopped for a little time, to obtain if possible some tidings of our hunter. We heard the distant crack of a rifle once or twice, and the sounds seemed to proceed from far up the cañon in the direction from which we had come. We waited for an hour, and as Will did not return I left Rube to guard the atajo while I returned on our trail. About two miles up I came suddenly on Will, standing on a ledge of rock about thirty feet over the bed of the cañon; while below, and quite close to me, was a very large cinnamon bear standing on his hind legs and trying with his limited activity to get to closer quarters with the hunter. Will's rifle lay on the ground near the bear, which I now perceived had received a wound from which the blood flowed freely. As yet neither game nor hunter had seen me, and I stood a passive and amused spectator of what was taking place. There were several slight projections on the face of the rocks, which had no doubt aided Will in reaching his present place of refuge, and these the bear attempted to turn to account in scaling the cliff. But there was a spot beyond which he could not mount, and as often as he reached it he invariably came to a halt, slipped, and fell down about ten or twelve feet. His perseverance was very laughable. No sooner did he reach the bottom than he again charged the rocks with a dissatisfied snarl, and again the same scene was enacted. Will, I thought, at first seemed anxious at these repeated attempts to reach him; but when he found that his adversary was unable to get up to him, he began to pelt him with stones, and this treatment naturally still more exasperated the temper of the bear. Suddenly Will seemed to be struck with an idea. Near him a large portion of the ledge was seamed and cracked, and by a little judicious pushing was

loosened so as literally to "hang by a thread." The hunter now again threw pebbles at his antagonist, and irritated him to a fresh attempt to scale the rocks; which the bear did with considerable good will. Just as he reached the spot where the ascent became impracticable, his adversary detached the heavy mass of rock, which rolled downwards with tremendous force, accompanied by a shower of smaller pieces; and the whole discharge took effect against the ribs of Bruin, precipitating him to the bottom with such violence that he lay for a moment quite motionless. A loud laugh announced the satisfaction this achievement occasioned the hunter. The bear raised himself somewhat stiffly, and giving his enemy a parting scowl of defiance, was about to take himself to the brushwood, when I put a ball into the side of his head which made him spin round and round like a teetotum. He was a very fat and an unusually large animal, and it was not until he received four bullets at close quarters that he finally lay quiet. Will's astonishment was extreme at hearing the shots and seeing me appear upon the scene, when he had every reason to suppose that I was several miles away. While taking the hams of the beast, he gave me the following account of his adventure :—

After leaving us in the cañon he got, as we have seen, on the hot track of the bear, and could hear the animal for a little distance forcing his way through the entangled undergrowth. When these sounds ceased, Will followed by the tracks which led out of the chapparal upon the trail by which we had come. Here the sign was good, so that the hunter followed it at a quick walk, and shortly came upon a little open space which had most likely been the site of a beaver settlement, the water having killed off the vegetation. There were neither beavers nor pond at this time, however; but close to the rocks the hunter perceived

the object of his search leisurely shuffling along, no doubt thinking himself safe from pursuit. In order to end the matter as speedily as possible, Will, seeing his presence was as yet unsuspected, stole on tiptoe after the bear, with the intention of putting a bullet into its brain. But just as he was within a few yards of the animal, it sprang suddenly round, and before Will could fire more than one or two ill-directed shots, the furious beast dashed the rifle from his hand, and would have seized him in its clutches, had he not sprung aside and with extraordinary agility clambered up the almost perpendicular face of the cliff. It was in this predicament I found him, and he had been there fully an hour and a half when I arrived to his assistance.

When we returned to where Rube awaited us, we camped for the night. We selected a sheltered little hollow, so that the light from our fire would not be visible at a distance. After supper Rube mounted guard, leaving Will and me to take the later watches. During the first part of the night we had no alarm, although when Rube came in he said he felt pretty sure that there was something prowling round the camp, as the mules seemed restless, and once or twice they started and ran together, straining their lariats. My watch was last, and just before daybreak I thought the animals seemed to exhibit symptoms of uneasiness. Looking fixedly for some time, I could discern in the dim light a black object on the ground where I felt quite sure nothing had been when we halted during the previous evening. I watched this suspicious apparition with great intentness for some time, and felt convinced I saw it move towards the spot where the mules were tethered. We had not staked them out to graze on this occasion, as we found not far from the spot a luxuriant growth of grass of which we pulled several large bundles, and these we threw to the animals.

They were not more than twenty yards from the fire, and as I watched the black uncertain figure which crawled over the rocks towards them, I became assured it was an Indian who was meditating a stampede. As soon as I was quite certain that the object moved, I raised my rifle and sighting low in front fired. A wild yell followed the shot, and a naked Indian sprang to his feet, but immediately reeled forward and fell. Will and Rube started up in great alarm at the sudden commotion, and together we examined the body of the ill-starred wretch. The bullet had struck him upon the collar-bone and had passed downwards, making its exit close to his spine near the "small" of the back. It was a raking shot, and blood poured in dark gouts from both wounds. Rube rather startled us by taking the scalp, which he said he did "on principle," though what kind of principle this was neither Will nor I had a very definite idea. Indians, as has been said, believe that the spirit of a brave who has been scalped is excluded from the happy hunting-grounds; and we supposed the old trapper intended to enjoy this barbarous triumph over such of the friends of the hapless marauder as might discover the mutilated remains. This savage was an Apache, and as our hands were already so deeply imbrued with the blood of this tribe, we felt that if we had the misfortune to fall into their power we could expect nothing less than death by the most terrible torture which their fiendish ingenuity could devise.

Near our camp we perceived a curious wall of marble, which seems to have been upheaved by some convulsion of nature. We scrambled to its summit, and observed that it was thrown up vertically to the height of from seven to twenty feet over the level of the ground, and stretched away on either hand along the crests of the hills for several miles. It was exquisitely diversified with gray, white, and red

marbles, and formed altogether one of the most singular objects which had as yet been presented to our observation. At a very short distance from this wall Will discovered a spot where a vein of galena cropped out, and Rube came upon indications of gold. We were anxious, however, to leave the locality, as we feared a visit from the band of Apaches to which our nocturnal visitor belonged. We therefore lost no time in packing the mules; and when on gaining a little distance I looked back, I saw half a dozen coyotes and zopilotes contending for the body of the Apache, which shone red and raw in the early beams of the sun.

An examination of the Burro Mountains shows them, as has been observed, to be the "divide" of this portion of the continent, although at first sight they appear to be nothing more than an ordinary range rising from the plain which skirts them. In leaving them, therefore, we began the long descent towards the Pacific Ocean, and after a toilsome march of nearly twenty miles we arrived at an isolated ruin which had been a station on the mail route when it ran along the 32nd parallel, but which now was but a melancholy reminiscence of better times. This place is called "Soldier's Farewell."

In the distance we perceived a cloud of dust flying across the plain, and shortly we could distinguish a large herd of antelopes, consisting probably of over three hundred head, scouring away with the speed of the wind. Rube regarded this as a suspicious circumstance, and suggested, what occurred also to Will and me, that they were flying from a body of Indians. Fortunately we saw nothing of them, although for some time we rode in constant expectation of suddenly encountering a band or war party of the savages.

The country about here is excessively sterile and broken. On all sides are scenes of rugged wildness and desolation.

In a hollow we saw two water-holes filled with a filthy slimy liquid, and round about were innumerable tracks and vestiges of game. As a rule, the country was bare and desiccated in appearance; but at intervals there were some patches of poor dry grass. The wind blew vast clouds of dust from the plain, which were sometimes caught up into the semblance of prodigious towers reaching heavenward, and several of these colossal figures stalked about the desert, giving an almost weird effect to the extreme desolation of the landscape.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SIERRA MADRE—BARNEY STATION—GAME—CIRCUMVENTING AN ANTELOPE—NOTES ON THE ANTELOPE—STRANGE EFFECT OF THE MIRAGE—NIGHT JOURNEY—MAIL ROUTE—DANGERS OF WESTERN POSTMEN—COYOTE-HUNT—PURSUED BY APACHES—RUBE AND WILL TO THE RESCUE—SCALPS—THICK CHAPARAL—RELICS OF AN INDIAN FIGHT—SKULLS AND OTHER REMAINS—APACHE PASS.

FROM the dreary ruin of Soldier's Farewell to the next point on our journey, Barney Station, on the great Madre plateau, a distance of twenty-one miles, we made what speed we could. This latter camping-ground, like the former, is also a ruin, and it strikes the beholder with a sense of the instability and insecurity of almost every attempt at colonization in this country. The difficulties of the desert routes, as well as the destruction wreaked by bands of marauding Apaches or Navajos, account for the relinquishment of many industries which have from time to time been started in these regions.*

We had left the mountains behind us, and were now on that vast and elevated table-land known as the Sierra Madre. The landscape here presents to the eye of the traveller an appearance of general level. The soil is destitute of moisture, and indeed for upwards of fifty miles in several districts of this region no running streams will be met with. Some portions of the apparent "dead level" will be found to be depressed, and form vast shallow basins, which collect the rainfall of an extensive area. These then resemble great

* At the present time the Indians are confined to reservations set apart for them by the Government, and much of the insecurity to life and property mentioned in the text is now a thing of the past.

lakes, which are often miles in extent, although only a few inches in depth. The evaporation of the water leaves a white shining crust, which shimmers far through the ambient air and resembles the alkali deserts or vast snow fields. These are known as "Playas."

At Barney Station we found very little water, and that of a most disgusting quality. We were greatly fatigued with our long ride of about forty miles along an arid dusty track; and cheerless as was the appearance of our halting-ground, we were glad when we rode up to it. This was evidently the drinking-place of all the birds and wild animals of the district. Immense flocks of birds circled round the water-hole, lowering in their flight until they touched the spring, and again shooting up with the quickness of thought. As we approached, several flocks of geese, ducks, and teal rose with a prodigious flapping, quacking, whistling, and screaming, and flew away over the desert. Great numbers of antelopes, deer, wolves, and coyotes came to drink; but the former animals, alarmed by our presence, galloped away and stood disconsolate at a great distance, afraid to venture nearer. The wolves, however, were not so timid, and these fellows actually charged the camp and satisfied their thirst after a fashion in spite of our bullets, which stretched several of them dead by the verge of the water.

Will proposed that we should circumvent the deer and the antelopes, which we could see far out on the plain looking wistfully towards their customary drinking-fount. After some debate we agreed that the only way in which we could do this was for one of the party to hide by the spring while the others rode off with the mules as if departing from the neighbourhood. This suggestion was acted on, and Will volunteered to play the part of butcher. Rube and I mounted our mules, and leading the horse, the others accom-

panied us without trouble. We rode without looking back until we had got to a considerable distance from the spring; and on glancing round we saw, to our satisfaction, that the antelopes and their timid comrades had already commenced to return towards the water. In a few minutes we heard two shots in quick succession, and on looking back we perceived the poor thirsty creatures flying at the top of their speed from the spring, while at the camp itself we could distinguish Will standing over something which lay on the ground at his feet.

We lost no time in returning, and were gratified to find that the bloodthirsty Kid had secured two antelopes, whose carcasses lay within twenty yards of the water-hole. We were in great spirits at this piece of good fortune, and we immediately set to work to kindle a fire and make camp.

Both these antelopes were in first-rate condition, and their tender steaks were fully appreciated after our long weary ride. It is on the dry elevated plains that this animal is at home, and he is so frequently found at great distances from water as to give rise to the impression that he is capable of existing without it. In the dreariest and most barren deserts of the west he is apparently as much at his ease as in more favoured regions where both pasturage and water abound. It is remarkable that the presence or absence of good grass does not seem to affect the condition of the antelope. He is almost invariably in good condition at the proper season—that is, when not worn out by the constant battles with rival bucks, or by maternal cares, as the case may be. There can be no doubt, however, that the antelope visits water at least once in the twenty-four hours, and hidden or inaccessible indeed must be the spring which his keen sense of smell does not discover.

It sometimes happens that the traveller threatened by

that most terrible of all fates, death by thirst in the desert, finds a water-hole, of the existence of which he, and perhaps all others, were ignorant, by watching the antelope, who will surely within twenty-four hours visit it to quench his thirst. This has already been exemplified by the story of Rube, who would otherwise certainly have perished.

The male of the species is armed with horns measuring from eight to fourteen inches in length, and these bear a remarkable resemblance to the horns of the chamois, but are of course considerably larger. At from two to four inches from the point they become slightly palmated, and a small branch or "prong" is formed. It is to this peculiarity that the animal is indebted for its name of "prong-horn." This armature, however, is but ill adapted for fighting, as the tips are bent inwards. Were it otherwise, much damage would result to the bucks in the rutting season, at which period their contests are frequent and furious. Each year the antelope is furnished with a fresh pair of horns. The old ones are not "cast" in quite the same fashion as those of the deer. In May the shelly outer coats or horny laminæ peel off, leaving the sensitive internal core or "pith," which is thinly covered with stiff black bristles. These are supposed to aid the animal in throwing off the horns, as they point towards the tips, and the "shells" once loose and started from their natural position cannot resume it owing to this obstruction. The growth of these strong hairs, in fact, may be said to force them off. The new horns grow with marvellous rapidity; indeed the whole process is the work of only a few days.

The coat of the antelope consists of a kind of hair, thick and brittle, about two inches in depth, and of a reddish hue on the back: this alters on the sides to a yellowish colour. The belly is white. Near the insertion of the tail, and

reaching up and down the buttocks, the hair is a beautiful pure white, and is longer than on any other part of the animal.

There is no more graceful creature on the plains than the antelope, and amid the wild desolation of nature his light, airy movements, are marked by the eye of the hunter with a double pleasure; for he is as good to eat as to look at, and it needs no little skill on the great treeless prairies to lure him within range of the rifle. Although more particularly a plains animal, yet he will often be observed in the park-like scenery of the Rocky Mountains in company with the black-tailed deer.

There is a trait in the antelope which has proved fatal to multitudes of these graceful animals. They are actuated in a very strong degree by both terror and curiosity, and these two qualities, apparently somewhat divergent in their results, combine to lead the antelope into the danger from which he wishes to escape. If any unusual spectacle excites them, such as a waggon crossing districts where they have been but little hunted, every band within sight on either side will rush towards it in a state of extreme terror, and charge past within a few yards in the endeavour to escape. The rifles of the hunters have then an opportunity of dealing death among their ranks.

We found Will's victims all that could be desired, and while we discussed them we chaffed him on his barbarity in compassing their death in such a cruel and treacherous manner. Will, however, was tolerably well used to our ways by this time, and treated all our insinuations, as to his "unnatural" conduct in slaying and devouring members of the kid or "goat" tribe, with sublime indifference. He even "bleated and capered," as was his wont when he wished to be particularly facetious, and we had to give up our attempt at chaffing him as a failure.

During the night we remained undisturbed; but nevertheless when darkness settled down on the desert, and our circle of vision was restricted to the immediate vicinity of the camp, our imaginations had full play, and at each wild weird noise which came up from the darkness we started and felt for the ever-ready faithful rifle, in anticipation of an Indian attack. When travellers have been harassed by these savages for some time, the nerves become very excitable, and rest almost out of the question. There are, however, some persons of so extremely callous a temperament as to be indifferent, to all appearance, to any such risks.

After sunrise next morning we beheld the arid plateau and "playa" transformed in a very beautiful and extraordinary way by the mirage. Palms and other graceful tropical forms of vegetation hovered in bosques in an uncertain manner like islands in a large lake, the motion of whose waves seemed so well defined and natural that we could hardly believe so faithful a representation to be mere illusion. The outlines were sharper than is usual in these deceitful appearances, and the view presented to us was just as realistic as if we beheld actual woods and water. The former element in the scenery turned out to be mere scrub a few feet high; and the beautiful lake, with its crested creamy waves, relapsed into the dry playa which lay at a little distance from our camp. These sudden apparitions of rich and varied vegetation, lakes, herds of deer or other animals, towns, castles, etc., enhance the charm of travel through these splendid solitudes. They are so novel to the inhabitant of a northern climate, and there is such a magical and weird effect produced by the sudden springing up of gorgeous scenery in a barren desert—of cities, palaces, and towers, where no human being dwells—that I found them greatly to add to the pleasure which my travels in these wild regions gave me.

We started from Barney Station at about six o'clock, and for upwards of twenty miles our way led us across the level plateau; after leaving which we entered the Peloncello Mountains at a point quite near a well-known pass which leads through the range, and which is called Stean's Pass. There was a poor spring here, which just showed the presence of water below the dry surface when we essayed to reach it with our pickaxe. After half an hour's work we excavated a hole three feet deep, and into this the muddy liquid slowly percolated. We hardly gave it time to settle when we drank our fill and then emptied it among our mules; and as we were anxious to push on, we started afresh after resting for a short time, although the next place where we could expect to find water was in the Apache Pass at Fort Bowie, a distance of thirty-six miles. Near Stean's Pass spring rises Stean's Peak, a beautiful conical mountain by which we had guided our course across the arid plateau to this spot. It is visible for many miles, and forms a well-known landmark to the traveller in these districts.

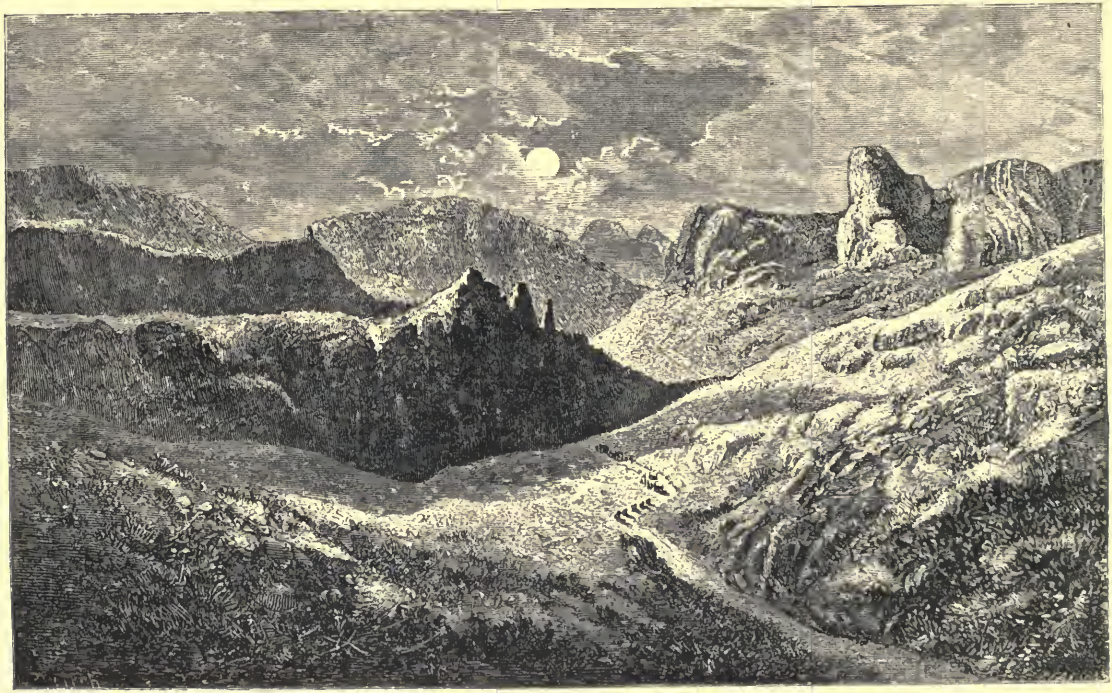
We waited at Stean's Pass spring only long enough to recruit ourselves and our mules somewhat, and also to avoid travelling further in the suffocating afternoon heat. All round us hovered the strange images of the mirage, and far off were herds of antelopes suspended apparently in mid air, while the familiar delusions of groves and lakes appeared, vanished or flitted about in a most fantastic manner.

As soon as the sun set we started, and journeyed onwards by the light of the stars. The night was fine and cool, and the stars shone with great brilliancy, throwing the faint shadows of ourselves and animals along the track. These star-shadows strike the new-comer from the North with a sense of astonishment, accustomed as he has been to the feeble light yielded by these orbs in the dull atmosphere of his own country.

Here the crystal air, as dry as it is pure, seems to magnify the light, rendering it almost possible to read small print by its radiance.

After travelling for five hours we reached the Cienega de San Simon. The word "cienega" implies a marsh, and it is therefore probable that at the times when there are heavy rains in this region the place becomes a swamp. Although we could discover no traces of water, we were delighted to find plenty of good pasture for our poor patient mules; and it gave us sincere pleasure to see the avidity with which they set upon it as soon as we unpacked them and staked them out. One of the duties of the watchers at night was to change the mules from one patch of grass to another, staking them out securely on a fresh place where the pasturage was good. By this means they did not suffer from being restricted in their range to the length of their ropes.

A caravan had evidently journeyed by this place not very long before our visit, as the wheel-tracks were still visible; and what made this circumstance if possible more obvious to us, as well as fortunate, was our discovering not far distant a portion of a broken wheel. This gave us fuel for our fire; and had it not been for this lucky "find" we should have had to forego the luxury of hot coffee at our midnight supper as well as at breakfast, as there was no wood at this place. This latter meal we partook of very early in the morning, so early, in fact, that Will and I, who were completely "done up" by our long ride, "struck," and told old Rube that if he persisted in awakening us at such unchristian hours he might take himself off, and leave us to follow him at our leisure. The old fellow got huffed at this protest, and seemed well enough inclined to take us at our word; but on Will asking him where he wished to have his bones buried when we came up with them on the track, the visions of Apaches which the



STEAN'S PASS BY MOONLIGHT.

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question naturally excited induced him to reconsider his course; and finally, after consigning Britishers to a very tropical climate, he quietly dismissed the subject in a low-muttered soliloquy.

This route was that selected for the conveyance of the mails, and notwithstanding the great danger from the Apaches, there was no lack of hardy fellows who undertook to ride from Tucson to Fort Bowie, one hundred and six miles each week, for the salary attached to the office of mail-carrier, which amounted to £40 per month. As might be supposed, the prowling savages often waylaid these daring men, who rode quite alone; and the non-arrival of the mail at its destination usually notified the fact that the carrier had been "jumped" and scalped *en route*. The ordinary custom then was for the mail-contractor to carry the bags himself until a successor had been found; and, as a rule, little delay occurred in finding another man reckless enough to undertake the task. People out here do not seem to set the same high value on their lives that prevails in long-settled and civilized communities. The idea is that they must die some time, notwithstanding every precaution, and that it will be "all the same a hundred years hence" whether they die at any particular moment, or carry on their existence for a few years more.

Old Rube having effectually aroused us, as has been said, Will and I got up and cooked our breakfast over a fire made from the remnant of the old waggon-wheel. The sun was already rising, and the heavens were a gorgeous ocean of colour, although the air was sharp enough to make us shiver while trying to scorch the remains of our antelope venison over an insufficient fire. We had hardly a drop of water left in our gourds to make our coffee; but we started, nevertheless, in very good spirits, which was due no doubt to the

"champagne" in the air of these elevated regions. There is a great buoyancy communicated to the spirits by the health-giving out-of-doors life, and the crystal atmosphere of the wild west; and there are countless cases on record of travellers who suffered from pulmonary affections being completely restored to health after a sojourn in these countries, when the skill of physicians had failed to do anything for the sufferers.

Not long after leaving the camp, my mule almost stumbled over a coyote which lay doubled up under a small bush; and as the country was sufficiently level and my animal fresh and frisky, I drew my revolver and gave chase to the skulking marauder. At first the wolf had it all his own way, and left us far behind; but by degrees he relaxed his speed, and I gradually overhauled him. The direction the beast took was that in which our trail lay, and I therefore had no scruple in continuing the chase. I was encouraged the more to do this as I saw symptoms of flagging in the wolf, and I therefore plied my spurs until I got a very respectable degree of speed up. Slowly but surely I gained upon my quarry, and being at length within forty yards I tried the effect of a snap shot at him. I saw the dust fly from the dry ground slightly in advance of the beast, and this had the effect of making him change his course, which now bent to the right or north of the trail. My mule was almost as excited as I was myself, and got over the ground at a speed that I had never given her credit for possessing before. By this time several miles intervened between me and my comrades, who could not keep me in sight, having my pack animal as well as their own to look after.

The wolf twisted and turned, dodging for his life, and so quick were his movements that I was quite unable to put a bullet into him, although I emptied my revolver in the

attempt. Just as I had drawn bridle in utter disgust at my want of success, my terror was not slight at perceiving a small band of Apaches, as I presumed, top a swell or ridge, which bounded the line of sight to the west, at a little distance; and after testifying their surprise in a loud "Ugh!" which I could distinctly hear, they made signs of peace by holding up their hands with the palm to the front. I was by no means desirous of cultivating their close acquaintance, and waved them off; whereupon one or two of them made a circuit as if to cut off my retreat, while the others charged straight towards me.

My mule had been pretty well blown in my quick burst after the wolf; but I hoped to meet my comrades before the wretches could overtake me. I had about two hundred yards' start, and as I turned to fly I heard the demoniac yells of my pursuers in fast and furious chase after me. Fortunately my mule was as much alarmed as I was myself, and the yells of the savages seemed a greater incitement to speed than either whip or spur. She fairly flew over the ground with the swiftness of a bird; but notwithstanding I could distinguish the gradually approaching hoof-beats of at least one of the party. Turning in my saddle I menaced the foremost with my pistol, and the sight of this dreaded weapon somewhat modified his ardour. He relaxed his speed a little; and now the whole band, which only consisted of six, rode abreast, their intention being to close in upon me in a body, thus giving me no time to use my arms.

On we flew over the hard, parched earth, which gave off clouds of dust from its surface, giving the chase the appearance of a whirlwind rushing across the desert. I strained my eyes to catch sight of my comrades; but as far as I could see lay the slightly undulating plain, broken here and there by a rugged ridge of rock, and on it I could nowhere see the

least sign of my companions. My heart began to fail me as I observed signs of exhaustion on the part of my gallant animal, and deeply I execrated my folly in leaving the trail in pursuit of a worthless coyote.

The savages also saw that they were gaining on me, and their yells of joy curdled my blood, as it proved they now saw themselves closing with me. I cast my eyes about me in search of a place where I might make a good stand, and, if I could not beat them off, at least sell my life dearly. About a mile further on was one of those rocky ridges so numerous in this wild, broken country; and towards this I directed myself in the expectation of finding some recess, behind which I could defend myself with some chance of success. But the face of the rocks was as smooth as a wall; neither crack nor cranny was visible.

The end of the ridge was within a quarter of a mile on my left, and in the hope of finding a refuge on the other side I rode for the point with the savages hard at my heels. They had lessened their original distance to about one half, and this last manœuvre of mine lost me some ground, as my pursuers cut off the angle the moment they saw I turned from the direct course with the intention of rounding the ridge. Already an arrow from the foremost shot past my ear with a sharp hiss, and another struck my mule in the flank. I turned sharply round the end of the rocks, and immediately my heart gave a great leap of joy, for there close to me were my companions! The ridge had hidden them from me as I raced over the plain. I could not have chosen a better course than the one which accident had determined. At the instant when my eyes fell upon them I shouted "Indians!" and both Will and Rube spurred forward with their rifles cocked. At the same moment the six savages shot round the ridge and pulled up short, with a simultaneous grunt of

surprise at seeing three where they had only anticipated to find one. Before they could decide on what course to pursue, Rube's Spencer and Will's Winchester sent forth their deadly contents, and two of the savages dropped from their horses. The others did not stand upon the order of their going, but disappeared like magic.

Rube immediately rode up to the two who had fallen, and was about to dismount for the purpose of satisfying his spleen by scalping the bodies, when, to our astonishment, one of the wretches rose, and drawing an arrow to the head loosed it at the trapper, who luckily saw the action, and by a timely duck to one side escaped the missile, which buried itself to the feather in the hunter's mule. Before the savage could fit another arrow to his bow, a bullet from Will's rifle stretched him lifeless upon the ground.

We did not wish to countenance Rube in his inhuman practice of scalping the dead bodies; we therefore left the old trapper to do as he pleased, conscious that all remonstrance on our part would be in vain, and rode on slowly leading the mules. We were presently overtaken by the old fellow, who was wiping his knife across the withers of his pack-mule, and in his belt we saw the ghastly trophies which he had severed. He was highly wroth at the loss of his riding-mule, and we had to divide some of his packs between our own animals. It was a considerable time before the trapper's equanimity returned, and this seemed in no small degree aided by his contemplation of the bleeding scalps in his belt. "It don't make up for the mule," said he; "but it makes one's feelin's easier to look at them thar top-knots!"

A portion of this day's journey lay through a district covered with thick chapparal, consisting chiefly of mesquits, aloes (of which I noticed two kinds), prickly pears, yuccas,

greasewood, cacti of several varieties, and other kinds of thick, thorny bushes, which formed a jungle almost impenetrable to man or beast.

We noticed some sad souvenirs of Indian ambuscades at this spot: skulls and other human remains lay scattered about, some of them apparently being almost quite fresh, as they still contained traces of animal matter and glistened with viscid juice. Several of the skulls bore the unmistakable marks of tomahawks or similar weapons, the bone being crushed in; and strange it was to see peeping through the gaping fissures of one or two of these relics of humanity of older date, small, bright-coloured flowers, the seeds having been deposited by the wind in the mould within!

We were now approaching the Chiricahui Mountains, among which lies the Apache Pass. We trotted along as briskly as the nature of the ground would admit, and soon "opened" the pass, and, turning up it, reached Fort Bowie, which is situated about six miles from the entrance.

MEXICAN PLANTS.

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CHAPTER V.

TREACHERY TOWARDS INDIANS—FORT BOWIE—RAILROAD PASS—UNWELCOME GUEST—TREACHERY—DEATH OF AN APACHE—NATIVE POPULATION OF NEW MEXICO AND ARIZONA—RELIGION—CUSTOMS—PUEBLOS—ACOMA—NATIVE ARCHITECTURE.

A FEW years before the time of our visit, the Apache Pass was the scene of an act of treachery on the part of the whites, as disgraceful as any which we find so commonly ascribed to the Indians.

Prior to the winter of 1861–62, the Apaches had tolerated the passage of the Mail Company's coaches through their territory, and had, on the whole, behaved well towards the Americans who resided in or travelled through this region. This good feeling may have been aided by the judicious conduct of the company in making occasional presents to the red men of food and clothing. Unfortunately for the continuance of this state of things, at the commencement of the great civil war a Federal officer named B—— received the command of this wild region, and he soon established his quarters at the mouth of the Apache Pass. While here, one day a young Mexican lad disappeared mysteriously; and his friends waited upon B——, expressing the belief that the Apaches had kidnapped or killed the boy. The chief of the tribe at that time was the since well-known Cochise, and this warrior on being summoned before B——, and accused of being concerned in the disappearance of the lad, strongly

denied all knowledge of it. Six warriors who accompanied him also denied having even heard of the Mexican boy being missing. B—— refused to credit their statements, and orders were given for the arrest of Cochise. Immediately on hearing this the chief slit open the tent with his knife and effected his escape; but his companions were less fortunate, and were all made prisoners.

There was present a man named Wallace, who had for a considerable time lived on good terms with the Indians, and he now proposed to visit the Apache camp and endeavour to arrange the difficulty. On his arrival among the Apaches he could obtain no intelligence of the Mexican lad; and he sent word to B—— that, as far as he could judge, the Indians were innocent of the charge made against them, adding that he himself was retained as a hostage for the safe return of the six warriors who had been captured.

The commanding officer, however, refused to make any terms with the Apaches, nor would he believe Wallace's statement. He threatened that if the boy was not instantly set free he would hang the six Indians that night. The boy, of course, could not be liberated, as he was not a prisoner; and the inhuman B—— actually had the six savages hanged; while next morning the body of the unfortunate Wallace was seen swinging from the verge of the cliffs overhanging the pass. Cochise and his tribe immediately went on the war-path, and many a terrible act of retributive vengeance they subsequently were guilty of against the whites. We were ourselves destined to have an interview of a very unpleasant nature with this chief; but I must not anticipate.

The scenery round Fort Bowie is very beautiful. On all sides are lofty, wild-looking mountains, chief among which is Helen's Dome. The fort itself is a collection of small buildings of adobe or sun-dried brick, erected on the top of

an eminence which commands the pass both up and down for several miles. It has been the scene of many an Indian skirmish as thrilling as any which have figured in the pages of Cooper or Mayne Reid. These furnish incidents for graphic writing, and in this shape are pleasant reading; but to the actual participators and sufferers they are anything but agreeable: there is no honour to be won; and to leave one's bones to be gnawed by wolves in a barren wilderness, while one's scalp flutters from a pole in an Indian lodge, has nothing even picturesque about it.

We spent two very pleasant days at Fort Bowie. The officers in command were as hospitable as they always are in these out-of-the-way places, where every wayfarer is made welcome with a heartiness that carries conviction of its genuineness. We were sorry to leave; but Will and I had still a very long journey before us, and we hastened away, although we would have much preferred to stay for some time longer.

As we wished to examine the country somewhat to the north of the Apache Pass, we retraced our steps for a few miles and then turned northwards, skirting the mountains; and after a most dreary and thirsty journey, we reached a deep depression in the range, about twenty miles from the fort.

This is known by the name of Railroad Pass; which name was bestowed upon it by its discoverer, Lieutenant Parkes of the United States army. Here we searched in vain for water; and as it was impossible to camp without this first requisite, we continued our journey for six or seven miles further up the dry bed of a water-course, and at last had the good fortune to find a spot where, after some digging, we procured sufficient for our wants. This river-bed descended from the sides of a well known mountain, the Dos Cabezas, or Two Heads.

Just as we were about to make camp I thought I discerned a movement behind some rocks at a distance, and thinking it might have been a momentary glimpse of an animal which had hidden among the boulders, I walked noiselessly towards the spot, having my rifle ready for a shot. When I got within about thirty yards of the spot at which I thought I had seen the moving object, a naked, painted savage sprang to an erect posture from behind a rock, and drawing an arrow to its head, stood on the defensive!

I was very much startled by this sudden and warlike apparition, not having at the moment the least expectation of seeing anything of the kind. I made signs of peace, and rested my rifle on the earth. The savage relaxed his bow, and stepped forward with a "How! how!" holding out his hand. I shook hands with him, and we walked towards the camp, Rube and Will looking about as astonished as I had been a moment before.

The savage, however, seemed quite at his ease, and affected not to notice the extremely cool reception offered him by my companions. He could only converse with us in Spanish, and we learned that he belonged to the Tonto Apaches, the most notorious gang of cut-throats and thieves in the whole country.

Rube presently drew my attention to the manner in which our unwelcome guest was painted. I observed that one side of his ill-favoured visage was coloured with vermilion, while the other cheek was daubed with mud. I looked inquiringly at Rube, who said, "That ar chap air in disgrace with his band, and air now a-scoutin' for scalps to make it all squar' ag'in: we'd better keep the sharpest kind o' look-out to-night, or you may lay he'll make a 'raise' by us. The varmints allers have thar phisogs dirted that-away when they're in disgrace."

We proceeded with our preparations for camping. A fire was kindled and the kettle set over it to boil; the mules were staked out, and we moved hither and thither without taking any further notice of the Indian. When our supper was ready we invited him to join; which he did with alacrity, bolting our provisions with the voracity of a wolf, and saying "Bueno" to everything. We could observe that he was taking an inventory of our belongings, probably with the intention of marking what would be most convenient to appropriate when opportunity offered. At length, greatly to our relief, he rose to depart, and taking his bow and arrows, he shook each of us very heartily by the hand and bid us good-night. He then struck up the dry bed of the stream and was presently lost to view.

We felt rather uneasy at having our camp known to this savage, who perhaps had comrades not far off. At any rate he himself would probably give us trouble during the hours of darkness; and with this possibility in view we brought the mules close to the camp at nightfall, and put out the fire. Will and I lay down to take some rest, while Rube went a little down the dry water-course to watch; thinking that as we had last seen the Apache disappear up stream, the likelihood was that if he returned with hostile intentions it would be from below, so as to take us by surprise. The old trapper took his macho with him, with the remark that "he could smell arey a red varmint as could be scared up a good hef mile and more, and would be a sight better'n a watch-dog, as he didn't bark."

By this time the gloomy shades of night obscured the neighbourhood; all objects had become dusky and vague, and we beheld our "guide, counsellor, and friend" disappear with a sense of anxiety on his account as well as on our own. Our ride during the day had greatly fatigued me, and

although I felt some apprehension, I fell into a sleep which was broken by unpleasant dreams. How long I lay in this semi-conscious state I do not know. I started several times, and on each occasion I found Will awake and listening. I dozed off again, and thus lay between sleeping and waking, when I was suddenly and effectively roused by Will laying his hand on my arm, and desiring me to sit up and listen. I never in all my life before became thoroughly awake in so short a time. I seemed at one bound, as it were, to spring from a condition of unconsciousness to one of intense watchfulness, while my heart beat so loudly that I could hear it a great deal too plainly.

The silence was deep and oppressive; but now and then a weary sigh would seem to float past—the wind among the aloes and cacti. Presently I heard a mule snort, then another, and they seemed to crowd together. I could instinctively see them with ears cocked and pointed in the direction of suspicion. Just then Rube returned from his watch, and I took his place; but I did not imitate the trapper by taking my mule to aid me on my post. I took up my station under a bush about thirty yards from the camp, down the ravine, and remained as motionless as a statue. The wind blew from me towards the mules; and this was a fortunate circumstance, as the sequel will show. Under any circumstances sentry duty is unpleasant; but when one has some reason to believe that a Tonto Apache is skulking towards one's post, "with blood in his eyes," the unpleasantness becomes aggravated. I made myself as small as possible, and concealed myself as well as the nature of the spot admitted. About two hours of this anxious watching had passed, and I was beginning to wonder how soon I ought to go to call Will to relieve me, when I heard a sound that made my heart stop and then beat loudly. It

was the sudden sharp snort of a mule, and it was repeated immediately by the others. I could tell that the animals were looking in my direction; and as I noticed what wind there was blew towards them, I knew the object of their alarm must be up-wind—that is, on the present occasion, down the watercourse. I turned in this direction and strained my eyes as well as my ears to catch any indication of danger, but nothing could I see or hear. The mules continued to be extremely uneasy, and this convinced me that their suspicions were not imaginary. A mule has a sharp nose; and as a rule these animals are very much alarmed by the scent of savages prowling round the camp. I lay down, the better to bring objects within the field of my vision; and while in this posture I got a terrible fright by hearing some one step up close to me. It was Will, who came to know if I could discover what fidgeted the mules. Together we listened and watched. All at once I thought I could distinguish an object which I could not recall having seen before. It was in the middle of the water-course, and I tried to recollect whether I had observed it when I first mounted guard, but to no avail. I fixed my eyes on this suspicious apparition, and desired Will to do the same. We both suddenly noticed it moving almost imperceptibly, while we caught a faint scratching noise.

"It's an Indian," whispered Will; "I'm sure it's an Indian, and he has got a bush in front of him to hide him." We watched a little longer to make quite sure, and having now beyond a doubt detected its approach, we both fired together.

A shriek followed the shots, and on running to the spot we found that our suspicions had been correct. An Indian lay dead on the ground. Rube now joined us; and having struck a light, we recognized our friend of the previous-

evening—dirt on one cheek and vermilion on the other. Blood was now, however, obliterating any distinction in their hues, flowing from a bullet-wound just under the eye. The poor wretch must have been peering forward through his screen when he was shot.

"Hurraw," cried Rube; "that's the varmint sure enough as comed in last night.—No offence, old hoss," he added, as knife in hand he bent over the body; "but I jest wants yer har, which is more'n ye does." So saying, the old heathen made two cuts quart and tierce round the head, inserted the point of his knife under the skin, and with a sudden pluck pulled off the scalp, and stuck it all bleeding behind his belt. "I does it," said he, perceiving disgust on our faces, "jest to rile the fellurs as finds his body. All them Injuns holds by the idee that ef they ain't got thar har on arter death, they'll be kep' out o' the happy huntin'-grounds; and that makes 'em mad, you bet."

After this scare we returned to camp; and as none of us wished again to go to sleep, we rekindled our fire and sat by it, conversing on the unpleasant episode which had taken place. The old trapper had had considerable experience among the Indian tribes of the south-west, and in answer to inquiries which I addressed to him, he gave me some information with regard to them, to which I add a few statistics.

At the present time the native population of Arizona and New Mexico is probably somewhat over thirty-five thousand. Of this number about twenty thousand are wild Indians; the remainder are Pueblo or town Indians, who live in houses of their own construction, are semi-civilized, and are subject to the rule of caciques. They dress neatly in buck-skin shirts, breeches and moccasins, and wear a girdle round the waist. They are only to be met with south of the thirty-sixth parallel of latitude; and as they preserve no

tradition of having reached their present territory from the north, the date of their migration thither must be very remote. They may be classified as follows:—

1. The Pueblo Indians of the Rio Grande Valley. These number about five thousand.

2. The Pimas Indians of the Gila Valley. They are scattered through eight villages, and number probably three thousand.

3. The Zuñi Indians. These are among the most civilized of the Pueblo tribes. The present population of Zuñi, situated latitude 35°, longitude 108° 50′, comprises about one thousand two hundred persons.

4. The Indians of the Moqui Pueblos. These towns are seven in number, and lie about one hundred and fifty miles north-west of Zuñi. They contain about two thousand five hundred souls.

5. The Papago tribes. These are distributed through nineteen villages, and the collective population can hardly be less than four thousand souls.

Those Indians who inhabit the valley of the Rio Grande became converted at a very early date to Christianity through the zeal of the Spanish missionaries. In each pueblo or town there is a church, ordinarily built of the sun-dried bricks or adobes of the country.

In the territory of New Mexico there are twenty-two pueblos—namely, Taos, Pecuries, Abiquiu, San Juan, Santa Clara, San Ildefonso, Pojuaque, Nambé, Tesuque, Pecos, Cochiti, San Domingo, San Felipe, Sandia, Isleta, Belen, Santa Ana, Zia, Jemes, Laguna, Acoma, and Zuñi. Within the jurisdiction of El Paso there are the following—Seneca, Isleta, Socorro, San Lorenzo del Real.

The population of these towns has fallen off very considerably within the present century. In the year 1790,

according to the statement of Mr. Ward, agent for the pueblos, the total number of inhabitants was eleven thousand one hundred and seventy-five; while in 1864 it had fallen to seven thousand and sixty-six, at which date several of the pueblos had entirely ceased to exist.

The greater number of the towns above named lie in the valley of the Rio Grande; but there are several which are situated at considerable distances from it, on some of the streams tributary to that river. Of these I may mention Taos, Laguna, Acoma, and San Domingo, all of which are characterized by a similarity of type. Ordinarily the houses are only of one story; but they are sufficiently capacious to accommodate several families. The roofs are flat, rising terrace-like one behind the other. Watch-towers are usually placed at the angles of the villages. In every village will be found a kind of council house, partly excavated out of the ground, and to this access is gained only by means of a trap-door in the roof. This is the *estufa;* and it is in this jealously guarded chamber that the sacred fire is kept constantly burning.

Each pueblo has its own system of government, presided over by a cacique, or supreme chief, selected from among the oldest and most trusted of the tribe. This position is held for life; and the authority of the cacique is usually sufficient to settle all questions of internal government. There is also a war-chief, selected from among the warriors for his bravery and cunning, who conducts the campaigns of the tribe against their enemies. There is another officer, the fiscal major, whose duties are civil, and relate to matters of public importance, such as repairs of churches, regulation of church affairs, etc.

The elders of the community meet together in council to debate all questions of importance in the government of the

tribe, and over these parliaments the cacique presides. This body chooses suitable persons to fill all the public positions, with the exception of that of cacique. The cacique is chosen by a kind of universal suffrage.

It is singular that the inhabitants of villages living under this system of government, and apparently forming a homogeneous people, should not all speak the same language. They do not do so; and when occasion requires intercommunication they resort to Spanish, which they seem very readily to acquire.

With regard to the religious ideas of these various tribes, there seems to be some doubt whether they can really be considered as *bona-fide* converts to Christianity, or whether, while assuming outwardly the forms of Catholicism, they really nourish in private their ancient superstitions. It appears to be beyond doubt that in some pueblos the estufa is still used as the place of sacrifice to the god Quetzalcoatl; and in the gloomy interior of this apartment still gleams the sacred fire, and from its azotea the priests look daily for the reappearance of Montezuma. The French missionaries who now labour among them are, however, much revered; and from this it is natural to infer that their adoption of Christianity is not altogether nominal.

The pueblos which lie west of the Rio Grande are frequently situated in very striking and commanding positions, upon the summits of high cliffs, affording great advantages for defence against attacks. Old Zuñi stood upon the flat top of a lofty mesa, one thousand feet above the plain at its foot. Laguna is built upon the summit of a limestone rock, about forty feet high, and can easily be defended by a small body of men against the assaults of vastly greater numbers. In this pueblo the houses are chiefly constructed of stone, plastered with mud, and are generally two stories in height. The outer wall of the first story is a blank; there are

neither windows nor doors in it. At its summit is a terrace, and rising behind this is another story, which is entered by doors. Access to the first or ground floor is had by means of ladders, which are lowered through trap-doors in the terrace mentioned as forming the summit of the first story. The upper floors only are used for sleeping in; the rooms at the ground level are used for storage. It is said that these people are strictly honest, sober, and industrious; while their women are modest and virtuous.

Acoma is perhaps one of the most interesting of the pueblos. Like so many others, it is built on the summit of an elevated mesa, whose precipitous sides reach a height of between three and four hundred feet over the valley. The buildings are larger than those of Laguna, having three instead of two stories, each successive flat being smaller than that underneath it. On the top of this mesa there are perhaps about fifty acres of land; and a long, winding flight of rock-hewn steps gives the only access to the town. This, of course, offers admirable facilities for defence. The Acomans are very wealthy for Indians. They possess large herds of cattle; while their farms yield considerable quantities of pumpkins, maize, peaches, etc.

As all the towns of these tribes bear a considerable resemblance to each other, and as the general similarity is shared by their inhabitants, sufficient has been said to give a fairly accurate idea of them without going further into details, which would perhaps be uninteresting to the reader.

CHAPTER VI.

DOS CABEZAS—MOUNT GRAHAM—SIERRA CALITRO—RUBE AND THE GRIZZLIES—FOREST ON FIRE—RUBE'S AWFUL POSITION—"THEY DON'T LIE OUT HYAR!"—HABITS OF THE GRIZZLY BEAR—TERRIBLE HURRICANE—ANTELOPES—ARAVAYPA CAÑON—BEAR-HUNT—SMOKED OUT.

THE Dos Cabezas forms the southern boundary of the pass in which we were camped, and is the terminal point of the Chiricahui Range on the north. Separated from this mountain by the breadth of the pass is another fine hill, Mount Graham, which forms the southern extremity of the Pina-Leño Mountains. From this point the distance either way to the ends of the pass is about equal, or seven miles; and the breadth of the valley between the two ranges mentioned is probably from ten to eleven miles.

This pass bears a greater resemblance to a fine valley than to such a mere depression between high mountain ranges as is suggested by the word "pass." It is covered with a most luxuriant vegetation, but is devoid of trees. Almost through its centre is scooped out the bed of an arroyo, or mountain-stream, apparently long dried up, as at the time of our visit it presented the appearance of a broad ribbon of succulent pasturage meandering through the verdant valley.

We started from our camp under the Dos Cabezas at daybreak, and shortly thereafter approached the western outlet of the valley, the sides of which formed a frame for a very striking view of the Sierra Calitro, which lay exactly oppo-

site. The whole of this district was evidently frequently traversed by Indians, as we constantly struck their trails; but by some unusual good fortune we did not meet the savages themselves. We were destined, however, to meet them several times during the further prosecution of our journey; and these rencounters were anything but agreeable.

Most of the Indian tribes are now placed by Government on reservations; but some years since this was not the case, and rapine, outrage, and murder were the unfailing attendants of the ferocious Apache, Navajo, or even of the more degraded and apparently less formidable Ute.

During the first part of our march this day we passed an extensive playa; over which, as it was still early morning, we beheld the usual phantoms of the mirage. It is shortly after sunrise that these illusions are most perfect in their outlines; which is probably due to the angle at which the sun's rays strike the earth at that time. The valley here may rather be described as a plain, as it appears almost a perfect level, and is covered with a very nutritious grass, which gives it an appearance of great fertility.

For some distance we rode along the flanks of the Sierra Calitro, looking for a suitable spot at which to make our camp. Towards the middle of the afternoon we perceived some cotton-woods rising by the edge of the range, and here we found a spring of water, which Rube said he believed to be Bear Spring. We halted at this spot and prepared to pass the night. Eastward lay the plain we had crossed, and over it we could see the Dos Cabezas and Mount Graham towering up skywards; while for many a league extending southwards stretched the Chiricahui Range, the afternoon sun striking full upon its rugged sides, through a glorious purple haze, which softened the rugged outlines of the hills, and gave them an artificial appearance of distance.

Rube's axe soon procured a sufficient supply of fuel; and when the kettle had been filled and placed over the blaze, the mules staked out on a bit of good grass, the packs neatly piled and covered up, we threw ourselves on the ground, and waited with some equanimity the boiling of the water. Coffee is the grand desideratum of the traveller in these regions: it washes down his tough meat, and communicates a grateful glow to his tired frame which perhaps no other beverage is capable of doing. Tea holds the next place to coffee; but it lacks the body of the latter.

As we lay by the fire we could command an extensive view eastwards; and far out we could see some large animals, but what they were we could not determine. They were too far to follow, and we therefore confined ourselves to guessing what they might be. Rube said they were probably cattle which had strayed from some party of emigrants. Will thought they might be wild cattle, and even suggested mountain bison; at which Rube laughed. "Thar ain't none o' them hyarabout," he said; "and they couldn't hev comed so far from whar they resorts. They keeps only in the thickest mountain-forests, and the nearest place they could a be air the Mogollon range; and I don't know for sartain if thar to be had in that eyther."

This speculation set us conversing on the various wild animals of these countries, and the old trapper communicated some interesting facts relative to them. After all, it is men like Rube who possess the most accurate knowledge of the animals, in whose pursuit they spend their lives. A closet-naturalist, from the examination of a tooth or a bone, has little scruple in making statements which he professes to deduce from these slender data. But there are many matters of which he must necessarily be ignorant, and these demand observation, often long continued, in order to be fully under-

stood. I admit that the professional hunters are often unreliable in their statements; but is not the scientist open to the same accusation? Many an exploded scientific theory, once held to be true, bears witness to this.

The trapper had had terrible encounters with that most formidable animal the grizzly bear; and he bore some traces of these, which he seemed proud to show us. Unbuttoning his buckskin shirt, he pointed to three or four deep grooves, reaching from just below the collar-bone to the lower point of the chest—all the skin and a great deal of the flesh and muscle had been torn away. These scars presented a ghastly appearance, the mutilated flesh not having been skilfully replaced; while round the edges it seemed to have sloughed away, leaving a deep hollow with sides of a purple colour. Both thighs had been badly lacerated, the claws of the ferocious beast having ploughed long furrows from the groin to the knee. With such terrible injuries it was amazing that the hunter could walk about with little peculiarity of gait, a slight hitch or jerk in lifting the right leg alone being observable.

Will and I were of course eager to hear the details of the combat which resulted in these injuries, and we presently drew the hunter on the subject, when he gave us the following narrative of the occurrence:—

"Them 'ar rips air not handsome," he began; "but I hev more, accordin' to sample, hyar" (indicating his back with a motion of his hand), "and mebbe somethin' better than them ye've seed. They were not all done at one time, though; it tuck a sight more'n one grizzly to use me up that a way; and I hev an idee them b'ars might jest as well a let me alone. They didn't make much out o' the speck'lation. But that ain't what I were a-goin' ter say.

"Yer were askin' how I comed by them marks. I were

out a good few yearn agone in the Nevada Mountains, and while in them diggin's I were constant on the search for 'colour' in the gulches and by the stream sides. Thar was silver a plenty in that country; but that were o' no account with me, as I hed been to Californy, and hed got an idee that gold were the only thing to gather. Wal, I didn't get any, and were intendin' to prospect in some other diggin's, and with this view I turned westwards ag'in. One evenin', while makin' my way down a heavily timbered gulch, I thought I heerd a nize like the snort o' a buffler bull. I wur a-thinkin' o' nothin' in partic'lar at the time, and so the nize didn't seem to get holt o' my old ears as mebbe it would at another time; but I could make out 'twere from the front it kem. I pushed through the underbrush out into a small open whar I seed at once't what it were—'twa'n't nothin' else but a grizzly as I had heerd, and an old 'she' at that, for thar were two cubs along with her. Whatever I hed been a-thinkin' of before, you bet I thought o' somethin' else now. I hed hardly showed my nose out o' the bushes when the old varmint gev jest one look and kem at me with her mouth open, red and steamin'; and a sight that were, I reckon! I let drive at her, o' coorse; but she didn't drop. I didn't expect that she would, as I knowed grizzlies air powerful partic'lar about not dyin', and I seed 'twould hev to be a stand-up fight with my knife and pistols. I let these into the b'ar, you may stake high, 'ithout losin' much time; but they didn't seem to hev much effect. I knew 'twere o' no use to run; thar were no time, as the distance were so short, and the heavy timber wa'n't near enough, or o' coorse I could hev shinned it up a tree.

"The b'ar tackled me afore I could think o' what were best to do; and then seein' as I were to all appearance bound to go under, I braced myself up and detarmined to sell my life as dear as I could. I put one foot firm on the ground and

balanced myself, ready to leap aside, or back'ards, or stab, jest as come handy. The b'ar run right into me, riz up and med a blow. I stepped back, but hardly in time, as the scaly varmint's claws took all the shirt off my shoulder and back; and though I didn't feel the blow much at the time, I very soon felt the blood runnin' down my back and into my boots. This med me raal savage. I hed dodged the b'ar; but she kem at me ag'in. I stood for her this time; and jest as she riz to grip me, I put my knife into her throat, under the chin, and gev it all my weight. The blade went in to the handle, thirteen inches it were; but I were whammelled off my legs in a twinklin', and fell with the b'ar atop o' me, and usin' her claws like all possessed. I kinder fainted then, and rec'lects nothin' more till I kem to; and then I seed the b'ar lyin' clost by, and the two cubs lickin' at her. She were dead. That last stab, as I found, hed cut her wind-pipe, and hed split her heart right in two! 'Twere lucky so far; but when I tried to rise I found I were badly hurt. One leg wouldn't work nohow; and, besides, I felt nasty weak, hevin' lost a sight of blood. I were pasted up in my clothes with clotted blood, partly from the b'ar it were; but I reckon I hed lost more than my old carcase could spare. Arter a little I could jest manage to rise standin'; but as to walkin', that were altogether onpossible. I loaded up both rifle and pistols; and the first thing I did were to kill the two cubs. I then med a fire; and crawled on all-fours to the crick to bathe myself. The cold water med me ache like thunder, but it freshened me; and arter a little while I roasted one o' the cubs and tried to eat a bit. I felt blamed queer, I tell yer! Things were wheelin' round me, my head bein' weak yet; but arter chawin' a bit o' the b'ar cub I lay down clost to the fire and fell asleep. It were a nasty sleep, fellurs, I tell yer. I hed dreadful dreams, and

every few minutes I kinder woke and thought I were bein' torn to raggles by some varmint; then I'd think I were bein' burned to death; and ag'in I'd feel icy cold down my back and legs, while my head were fairly a-blazin'. At last I got a quiet sleep; and when I woke I couldn't nohow make out whar I were, nor whether I hadn't died and seed a place we heers tell of as waitin' for evil-doers. I hed an idee that 'twere day when I went asleep; but at fust when I woke I seed a mighty glare all around. The sky above were like an ocean of blood; the crick bottom were lit up with red light, so that every stick and limb shone out clear; and I heerd such a nize o' splittin', crackin', whistlin', and roarin' as seemed to come from no airthly source. As yet I hedn't looked round; this is what I seed the fust glimp, and in my bamfoozled state I couldn't understand what it all meant. But on turnin' round I knew at once't what it meant: the timber on both sides o' the crick bottom were in a blaze, and the fire were comin' down torst me at the rate o' a gallopin' horse, sendin' showers of sparks far before, and lightin' the long dry grass which already hed tuck fire within a hundred yards.

"I knew 'twere no time for swoppin' horses, and so I got up; but yer may stake high I felt in anything but case for a race. I could jest hobble along; and I med the crick, turnin' down it, wadin' up to my waist in snow-cold water. I fell every ten yards, and got so stunned and freezed and fooled with the bad usage I were gettin' that I hardly knew what I were a-doin'. I knew I hed to get out o' that crick bottom in the shortest time it could be done; but this idee were so cloudy in my mind that I kep' along the water, sousing into the pools, fallin' over the rocks, and goin' generally heels over head every which way, that I never thought that thar might be a shorter way out than by keepin' to the

bottom. I could hear the fire roarin' behint, and the trees bustin' and blowin' up with reports like cannon; and the nize seemed to me to be comin' nearer, which med me get over the ground faster than ever. Sparks fell by me, and dropped hissin' into the water; and every now and then deer and elk galloped past flyin' from the fire. I seed two 'painters' go by, never as much as lookin' at me as they passed; and, fellurs, thar were two grizzlies hoofin' down the bottom pretty lively, and lookin' back sometimes as if they'd a mind to fight the fire if it could be done. These varmints left me behind; and, strange as it may sound to say, I felt lonesome like when every livin' thing hed gone, and I were left alone to run my race before the devourin' fire. I began to feel weak ag'in. I reckon I would hev hed enough to do at my best to make my way before the flames, which kem on at a speed you'd hardly bleeve 'ithout bein' thar to see; but now I were lame and weak, and I ran like one in a dream. 'Twere a fearful run; and each moment nearer kem the fire, and thicker fell the sparks an' ashes. I could see the flames now. At fust when I started down the bottom I hed put some timber atween me and the fire; but I were now in view, and like as if it hed been a livin' thing a-huntin' me, the sight o' me appeared to give it more life, and I felt it were gainin' on me at every step.

"The crick bottom got narrower, and the two sides drew in closer torst each other; and seein' this, I began to hope that it might cañon, and if so be it did, thar might be an end o' the trees and, o' coorse, the fire. But thar wa'n't no sich luck, I guess. I soon found that thar were a fall in the crick; 'twere at a place whar the banks riz up straight as poplars on eyther side; and along the banks back'ards thar wa'n't no place whar I could climb. I were in a raal trap: the falls in front, fifty foot deep I jedged; behind were the

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fire; and on right and left were steep banks of rotten clay, fifteen foot high, with thick timber atop. I med an attempt to climb out, but the rotten stuff caved in and let me fall. The fire were now comin' very close, and I could feel it gettin' hotter and hotter every minute. I were nigh a'most choked with the smoke, which were drivin' down the bottom before the wind jest as if I were in a chimbly. I ran to the falls and looked over; 'twere hopeless to get down. The water fell in one solid sheet straight to the bottom, and the black, smooth, shiny rocks didn't offer a foothold; a chitmunk couldn't a gone down. I seed the fire now within a hundred yards; flames shot up a hundred feet above the crick and wrapped the trees around jest as you'd wind a painted cloth about 'em; thick timber fell off the high banks into the water with a terrible report; and showers of sparks and hot coals fell so thick about me that I hed to keep brushin' 'em off my clothes.

"I knew I hed no time to lose, and that it hed got to be 'drown or burn' with me. I med up my mind to try goin' over the falls, whatever kem of it, when my eye fell on a spot whar I thought I could climb the bank. It were at a p'int whar it wa'n't a yard from the edge of the crick; the clay hed fallen forward, and thar seemed to be a chance of climbin' out in a channel worn by water from above. I ran at it and made a kind of leap: the clay held. I grabbed roots that stuck out and hauled myself up. I were jest a'most sartain of gettin' out when my foot slipped, and afore I could clutch anything to save myself by, I fell back-'ards and tumbled kersplash into the crick! 'Twere five or six feet deep hyar, so the tumble didn't hurt; but afore I kem to the surface the fust thought that flashed through me were that over the falls I must go, as the place whar I slipped were within ten yards of 'em. The crick ran swift-

hyar, bein' only about hef the width it were a little higher up. I kem up pretty speedy, yer may be sure; but it were at the very brink. The next second I went over. I rec'lets seein' the blazin' forest lookin' like the gates of Tophet, the blood-red sky spreadin' across the open above; and then the stiflin' gurgle and rush of the water seemed to put out the fire. I felt myself a-floatin' away, down — down; and though I knew I were a-drowndin', I did nothin' to save myself. It seemed so cool and pleasant like; and I thought I were in a place lit up by the brightest, yellowest sunshine, fallin' upon green branches wavin', wavin', and I heerd the singin' of many birds. Then the sunlight seemed to fade away, and the birds' singin' to get fainter, and it grew dark and cold. I floated away out of the world like, and were as good a'most as dead. I lay thar, or leastways I arterwards knew I lay thar, for a couple of hours or more. When I got a faint notion that I wa'n't dead entirely, I found I were lyin' at one side o' the deep pool into which the water fell from above. I could see the green and white sheet of solid water stretchin' up to the top of the rocks and lined ag'in the fiery sky; and the spray it churned up in the whirlpool below fell in a shower on my face. I were lyin' on my back, hevin' run aground in a little spot, about two feet wide, between two rocks, whar some shingle hed collected, and med a kind o' toy strand, as I may say. I were too weak to stir, and thar I lay lookin' up torst the sky, which were still red with the shine of the burnin' forest, and watchin' the woods still blazin', and listenin' to the thunder of the falls. The fire had passed me, and were burnin' along down the bottom.

"By-and-by I tried to stir, but grievous hard work it were, I kin tell yer. I managed to get ashore, whar I fell on my face and turned deadly sick. I reckon it would have

touched an Injun to see the way I were in. The sickness relieved me, and arter another spell I could sit up, and began to think of how I could get out. Thar were one thing sartain, and that were, that if I'd lost my rifle I might as well die at once't, as without it I could get nothing to eat. I hed a faint notion that I hed throwed it and my powder-horn down in my fright at the fire overtakin' me, at the spot whar I tried to climb the bank above the falls. It might yet be thar. I crawled out of the crick-bed, and arter a deal of weary work got round and back ag'in to this spot; and at fust I couldn't see any sign of rifle or powder-horn. The fire hed heaped lots of charred trees and all kinds of sich rubbish atop of the place, and some of these were still burnin'. I thought that, o' coorse, the rifle were quite ruined and the powder blown up, when the idee tuck me that mebbe they hed got kivered up with the dirt and clay that caved in with my weight when I fell. I tossed and pulled at it for some time, when I were main glad all on a sudden to come on the rifle, which were not a bit hurt; and under it I got my powder-horn, safe as ever. Only for that lucky cave-in of the bank they'd a been burned up. I hed my bullet-pouch still round my shoulders; so thar I were arter all, sick and sore and weak, and, I may say, half-drownded too, but still able to crawl along, and, best of all, with my rifle in my hand. With that I knew I could get food; and I hed no fear that with food and rest I would get round ag'in. To make a long story short, I lay up in another crick bottom a few miles away, whar the game were plenty; and in a month I were as fit to go as I am now. Yer may bet, though, I hed enough of grizzlies for some time. I heerd arterwards that 'twere Injuns hed sot fire to the timber, to burn out two miners who hed the ill luck to hev thar camp found out by the varmints. One of the miners

were shot as he tried to break away; and the other'n got into a cave, whar he cached until the fire hed passed by."

Rube here stopped, and seemed lost in the recollection of his marvellous escape.

"Is all that true, Rube?" asked Will bluntly. "Where I come from, people would say the paint was put on just a trifle too thick."

The hunter made no reply for a moment, as if hardly comprehending that doubt could be entertained with regard to the truth of his narrative. At length he said calmly, "Stranger, do people ever tell lies in your country?"

"I am afraid they do rather often," replied Will.

"Ah, I thought so," said the hunter, quite relieved. "I don't blame yer, then, for a-doubtin' me, though I showed yer the rips that ar grizzly med on my old carcase. People out hyar don't lie. I can't show yer the marks of my drowndin', seein' as it didn't make any; but for all that it kem mighty close on rubbin' out Rube Herring."

Whatever might be said with regard to the truth of Rube's story, I fear his statement, that "out hyar people don't lie," is open to question.

This singular adventure led to some conversation on that terrible animal the grizzly bear; and from Rube, whose experience was considerable, we gathered some information, which is worth noting.

The grizzly is the most formidable as well as the largest of the carnivora found on the American continent. His natural habitat is confined to the mountains, but he has very often been met with on the plains at a considerable distance from them. This is especially the case in autumn, when he rambles long distances in search of the numerous berries and wild fruits found at that season. The wild grape thickets, as well as those of the wild plum, are a favourite haunt, and

of these fruits the shaggy monster is extremely fond. As a rule, the grizzly is a shy animal; that is, his nature leads him to prefer dark, sequestered retreats, where it is hard to follow him up, unless the hunter be provided with dogs trained for the purpose. On hearing any suspicious sounds, which would seem to indicate the approach of danger, he usually makes off, uttering a hideous sound, a combination of a grunt and a roar, which certainly induces considerable caution on the part of the hunter. Although a grizzly will retreat when he has the choice, no animal fights with such dogged, indeed, demoniac determination, when he fancies himself surrounded or cut off. Odds then make no impression, and he will charge a regiment with as much ferocity as if assailed by only one antagonist. The female, as we have seen in the instance cited by Rube, will make a stand by her cubs; but this is not invariably her practice, as she has often been known to seek safety in flight, leaving her young to their fate. When "cornered," the ferocity of an old male grizzly has probably no parallel among wild beasts. He has considerable activity, enormous strength, long, terrible claws, which cut like chisels; and at each blow a victim is killed outright, or maimed for life, as well as most frightfully mutilated. His tenacity of life is very remarkable; shot after shot may be fired into him with no other result, apparently, than that of increasing his rage. With regard to this peculiarity, there is one circumstance which should not be lost sight of, and it is this: the hunters of the West, until within late years, were in the habit of using very small bore rifles, often carrying round bullets weighing not more than sixty to the pound, and even lighter. Their object in this was, of course, to economize ammunition, by getting a greater number of rounds out of a given quantity of powder and lead. Armed thus lightly,

it was only to be anticipated that such animals as the grizzly bear could not be subdued with one or two shots, unless the hunter's aim was very exact. Thus arose an exaggerated idea of his invulnerability. With modern Express rifles these animals have been "bagged" by sportsmen with little difficulty; although occasionally, of course, bad shooting will result in a very lively scene, and some damage, even loss of life, may result before the formidable beast gets a quietus.

Any one who has the ill luck to get caught by a grizzly bear is most fortunate if he escapes with his life. At a military post in the West such an individual was to be seen a few years since; and judging from the description of his injuries as given by an eye-witness, he must have been endowed with the tenacity of life ascribed to the bear itself to have survived them. It seems that while acting as guide and hunter to a party of Californian miners, he one day encountered a grizzly bear while ascending a steep and narrow track which led up the side of a precipitous hill. There was no means by which the hunter could avoid the encounter: on one side rose the perpendicular cliff, on the other sunk the precipice; while to have turned back would only invite pursuit from the monster, who was quickly approaching. The brave fellow made the best of the circumstances, and braced his nerves for a desperate fight. The bear reared himself upright, as is their custom, and in this attitude commenced the attack. The hunter advanced his rifle, put the muzzle into the beast's open mouth, depressed the butt at the same moment, to throw the ball upwards through the skull, and fired. The shot was instantly fatal; but in the fraction of time during which the bear lived, with one movement of his powerful claws he rendered the man a wreck for life. "One fore claw passed over the man's right shoulder, had hooked under the right shoulder-blade and torn it out

entirely. The other fore claw had torn all the flesh from the right side. One hind claw had torn open the lower abdomen, letting out the bowels, and badly scarifying the left leg, while the other hind claw had torn every particle of muscle from the right thigh from the groin to the knee. In spite of these terrible injuries, the man, after many months, recovered. When I saw him, he was apparently in good health, but could not use, or even move, his right arm or either leg. He gave me the particulars of his fight, and described his wounds with great animation and gusto, smoking his pipe the while, and wound up with the remark, 'Anybody can fight bear that wants to; I've had enough grizzly in mine.'"*

When wounds such as these can be inflicted by this monster in a single instant, we can imagine the desperate case of any one unfortunate enough to be in his power for a few minutes! The grizzly is distinguished by a peculiar habit. If his enemy is knocked senseless, or if by the exertion of great presence of mind he shams death, the animal will not mutilate the body, but after snuffing about it for a little will retire. He sometimes has been known to carry away his victim under these circumstances and bury him, by heaping dried leaves or soil over his body!

The female produces from one to three cubs at a birth, usually in the early part of the year, and these remain with her until the following fall, when they retire to their winter quarters. The food of this species consists chiefly of various roots, and such wild fruits as are found within its range. These are plums, cherries, wild grapes, acorns, etc. It is also an indefatigable worker among decayed logs, turning them over in search of larvæ and insects: ant-hills are

* "Hunting Grounds of the Great West." By Colonel Dodge.

torn open easily with the powerful fore arms, and the teeming inhabitants eagerly devoured.

While interchanging our remarks, each contributing some few facts from his own knowledge, the bright sun was hastening westwards; and when, having at length exhausted the subject, we began to stretch and manifest other symptoms of fatigue, twilight was already falling upon the landscape. In the north, angry-looking clouds were massing; and there was an ominous stillness in the air, which seemed charged with electricity. The mules were uneasy, and did not feed well; so we brought them nearer to the camp, and saw that their lariats were well secured. Rube prophesied a severe thunder-storm, and we made what preparations we could to render ourselves comfortable. The packs were heaped to windward of the fire, or rather on that side from which we expected the wind, and having dug a trench round them, to carry off the wet, we mended our fire, and sat round it in expectation of what was to come.

The clouds grew darker each moment and hurried towards the zenith, throwing an appalling gloom over the earth, which was already vague with the shades of approaching night. In the distance a low muttering became audible; and a pale, watery gleam began to surround the edges of the vast volumes of blue-black vapours which were inwrapping the whole heavens in their folds. This marked the descending deluge. The silence was oppressive, and was unbroken, except by an occasional growl which proceeded from the murky darkness of the sky. Suddenly a stream of fire pierced the gloom, lighting up with ghastly distinctness plain and mountain, and leaving behind a tenfold darkness. Scarcely had the flash imprinted itself upon our sight, when a deafening roll of thunder crashed along the heavens, shaking the solid earth with its ponderous vibration, and terrifying

the mules, which tried to break away. We flew to prevent this; and now our miseries began. Flash followed flash so rapidly that they might almost be said to yield a constant light, as their pale blue and jagged streams shot from the clouds and zig-zagged across the sky. Many shot so close past that we could hear the vicious crackle of the electric fluid; and we could see them strike the plain, bounding like snakes of fire to the horizon. I had heard some loud thunder in my own country, but I had never heard anything to compare with what I this night experienced. The crashes followed so closely upon each other that for some time it is hardly an exaggeration to say that there was but one long-continued appalling roar. And during this terrific elemental strife the rain poured down in torrents: it seemed as if the atmosphere was transformed into a furious maelström, torrents contending with torrents, and as if our camp was the vortex of the struggle where the shattered masses of water were hurled to the earth. And through this driving deluge the lightning darted, now playing round the peaks of the Calitro Mountains, and again shooting slantwise towards the earth. A huge poplar was struck by the fluid scarcely a hundred yards from the camp, and was completely shattered. We could mark the ruin wreaked upon it by the ghastly gleam of the flashes, the riven fragments of the trunk leaning asunder, while its branchy top slowly rolled off to leeward, impelled by the fury of the hurricane.

A single instant sufficed to extinguish the fire, and of course we ourselves were wet to the skin in a moment. This uproar continued for about half an hour. I could see Will and Rube holding on to rearing mules by the light of the flashes, and I have no doubt that they beheld me similarly occupied. The storm-cloud gradually fought its way

southwards; and long after it had passed us we could see the lightning playing through it, and hear the deep resonance of the thunder. Before the turmoil had quite subsided, I caught a glimpse of the eye of the mule I held: it was turned backwards, and apparently fixed in terror upon something which I could not see. At this moment I heard that well-known sound which makes the heart beat and tightens the grasp upon the rifle—the low wail of a "painter." The mule, no doubt, scented the ferocious beast, and the terror-stricken animal trembled violently, and pulled hard trying to break loose. In the momentary light afforded by a flash I caught sight of a long, low animal, crouched within ten yards, its eyes fixed in my direction, and apparently ready to spring. It was immediately swallowed up in the darkness. I could only contrive to hold the mule with considerable difficulty; and I had also to keep an eye to the old horse, which, although usually as steady as a rock and not at all weak-nerved, was now almost as much frightened as the mule, so great was the fear inspired by the presence of the puma.

We thus stood holding the mules for more than an hour, wet through, chilled to the marrow of our bones, and every now and then, with great exertions, preventing a stampede. There were evidently two pumas prowling round the camp; but in the thick darkness it was impossible to get a shot. Day at length broke, and never did shipwrecked mariner behold the approach of a sail with more pleasure than did I welcome the warm glow which shot over the eastern horizon and illumined the heavens. We found plenty of puma "sign" round the camp, and Rube started off on the tracks of one which led up along the cotton woods. Will and I felt very woebegone and bedraggled after such a night, and in the raw morning air we both shivered like

aspen leaves. We set to work to make a fire, and for this purpose we found the *débris* of the shattered cotton-wood useful, as, on examination, we discovered that several of its branches were dead and "dry." The thunder-shower, however, had wetted everything, and we had more smoke than fire for some time, until the growing blaze absorbed the moisture. After drying ourselves as well as we could, we set about preparing breakfast; and as this was just ready, we beheld Rube returning, but without success, from his puma-hunt. He had lost the tracks among rocks and stones, and could not carry them for more than a mile from the camp.

As soon as we finished our primitive meal, we packed the mules and started. The sun was now well over the horizon, and, rare spectacle on these desert plains, his warm beams drew clouds of vapour from the earth, while the playas were transformed into real lakes, a few inches only in depth, but of great superficial extent. We passed Kennedy's Spring, where some travellers had apparently recently encamped, as several empty meat-tins lay scattered about; and there were the embers of two fires, through which no grass blades were as yet growing.

Far away over the plain a band of five antelopes were slowly moving, now and then stopping to regard us with suspicion. Will left me to take care of his pack-mule, and taking advantage of a depression, he rode hard to head them before they arrived at a ridge of rocks which lay in advance of their course. Rube and I proceeded very slowly, which we judged to be more prudent than to stop altogether, in which case the antelopes might also halt to watch us. As we continued our march, the timid creatures, according to their habit, began to fear that they would be headed off; and they therefore trotted off springily toward the rocks,

where in a minute or two we had the satisfaction of seeing Will ensconced and ready for them. But here their acute instincts told them that danger lay hidden. They suddenly stopped short, their heads thrown high and somewhat forward, the impersonation of grace. But alas for their caution! Two hundred yards was the limit of the distance that divided them from the hunter. We could see him raise his rifle; and as the smoke puffed from the muzzle, a fine buck leaped from the plain, fell, rose, and staggered a few yards, and fell again to rise no more. His companions scoured away with the speed of the wind, jumping aside as they heard the whistle of a second bullet sent after them by Will, and which knocked up some dust in advance. We rode up to the dead antelope, and watched Rube butchering it. The old fellow had been disgusted by the unscientific way in which Will and I had "sp'iled the meat" of the last antelope that had been shot, and he insisted on doing the cutting up himself; an arrangement to which we did not object.

After this little episode we continued our journey, and rode for many hours across a dry plateau, exposed to the beams of a tropical sun. I could hardly believe my memory that I had so lately suffered agonies from wet and cold, as I felt the perspiration dropping down my cheeks, and noted the lather on our poor suffering animals. Towards night we struck the Aravaypa Cañada, and turned along its smooth grass-covered bottom. Riding for some distance, we observed that the sides gradually rose until they assumed the height of bluffs, while the "bottom" was diversified by clumps of bushes; and here and there were patches of willows, which indicated the presence of water underneath the soil. Indeed, that there was a stream here at intervals was evident, as we could see its well-marked course winding downwards under the tall cliffs.

We halted as evening began to draw in, and made camp. We were fortunate in finding a small spring or water-hole; and, well satisfied with our situation, we made a prodigious fire, and set to work to boil the choicest portions of the antelope. We were none too soon in doing this, as some of it was already spoiled by the heat. We enjoyed a hearty meal, however, off the remainder. Near here was a sulphurous spring quite unfit for human use, or indeed for any other. It was perceptibly warm, and perhaps might be beneficial in cutaneous affections.

This night offered a grateful contrast with the preceding. We were undisturbed, and although we each took our turn of sentry duty, we enjoyed a refreshing sleep which quite restored our spirits. When the glorious sun again flooded the landscape with his glowing beams, we were up blithe and jovial, and set about our usual preparations for a start, with more than our ordinary good spirits. Rube even was heard to hum what he believed to be a tune; but although the result was a dismal failure, it heightened the sensations of elasticity which Will and I felt, and we accepted the phenomenon as a good omen.

It was a merciful dispensation that gave us these good spirits at the commencement of what turned out to be the most fatiguing day's travel we had yet experienced. After starting from Eureka Spring, we rode for ten miles before meeting with another drop of water. At this point, however, we found a splendid spring gushing out of the earth about midway in the cañada, and forming the source of a stream which irrigated the lower portions of the valley and produced a luxuriant vegetation of many kinds of trees and bushes. We stopped here for a short time to drink and to water the mules, and again proceeded. All the remainder of that day we held on, and throughout the night, until the

brightening of the sky in the east announced the approach of day. We camped by the verge of a rivulet, and, utterly worn out, lay down and slept until the afternoon. During this ride we had covered, probably, upwards of sixty miles; and never did I enjoy a sleep so profound or so refreshing, although my bed was simply mother earth, and my only covering a navajo blanket, which I had thrown over me to keep off the heat of the sun.

At this spot there was little shelter; but if we had only continued our ride for a few miles further, we should have enjoyed the shade of a thick grove of cotton-woods. We spent the night here, and on the next day we found ourselves riding amid a glorious vegetation. Cotton-woods, cedars, cacti twenty-five feet in height inwreathed in gorgeous blossoms, and all the varied vegetable productions of this section of the country, surrounded us; and I never tired of refreshing my eyes by resting them on these luxuriant thickets, aching as they were with the endless panoramas of the desert plateaus. Birds of many hues flew from tree to tree, and gave life to the scene; the refreshing gurgle of water hidden beneath the leafy canopy of overhanging foliage rose upon the air; and, in fact, we seemed to have got into a new world. It is when worn out and scorched by long travel through arid wastes that such scenes as these are properly appreciated, and the buoyancy of our spirits increased as each turn in the path revealed some new feature of the picturesque landscape.

We halted at noon, and lay in the shade of magnificent cotton-woods seventy feet in height: a gentle breeze stirred their branches, and produced a delicious sense of coolness. Our mules cropped the luxuriant herbage, and seemed to enjoy the change quite as much as we did ourselves. The tracks of a very large bear were visible in the soft margin of

the stream, and after our midday repast we hid the mules in the grove of cotton-woods, and all three started in pursuit. It was a foolish thing to leave camp without any one in it to keep guard; but we had not seen any Indian sign lately, and we hoped for the best.

After leaving the rivulet, the trail led through the cotton-woods and across the bottom or cañada (which was gradually approaching the dimensions of a cañon), and towards the broken cliffs at the other side. For some way back on our course these bluffs had presented the appearance of a high cliff worn down in terraces. The topmost summit formed one, and under this there were two others, each of which seemed the true summit as the cliff was scaled, the deception becoming apparent only when each terrace was mounted in turn. We could see high up in the face of the second terrace the mouth of a cave, and we had no doubt that this was the home of our bear. Will, who started up the steep acclivity the moment he perceived the opening, shouted to us to come up. We therefore left the trail, and shortly stood at the entrance to the cave, where there were innumerable traces of our game. A very much soiled and beaten trail led inwards, and our only doubt now was as to our next proceeding.

"I guess I'll make the varmint show," said Rube at length.

He immediately returned to the cañada, and searched about apparently in quest of something which was to assist us in our attack on the bear's stronghold. We watched him with curiosity, and soon saw him cutting some of the scrub which grew in tufts and small patches here and there along the cañada. This was the ideodondo, or, in trapper phrase, "the stink-plant;" and bearing a large armful of this, Rube rejoined us at the mouth of the cavern. A heap of-

dried grass was placed by the hunter within the cave, at some little distance from the entrance; and a light having been applied, it sprang into a blaze. The stink-plant was then piled on top, and having seen it fairly under way, Rube returned; and the three of us piled thick brushwood in the mouth of the cave, in order to prevent the escape of the smoke. Having effected this to our satisfaction, we cocked our rifles, and awaited the success of the experiment. Nearly half an hour passed, during which we heard nothing of the bear; and fearing lest the fire should have gone out, the old trapper removed some of the brushwood from the entrance. Thick clouds of intensely nauseous and disgusting smoke poured forth, driving Rube coughing before it. We replaced the branches; and perceiving ourselves how suffocating was the smoke, Will and I began to entertain better hopes of the result. In a few minutes we heard unmistakable sounds proceeding from the cave. A loud snarling sneeze, followed by a cough, announced that the bear was awakened, and might be expected at any moment to break out. We stood breathlessly listening, keeping our eyes fixed on the bushes which we had piled in the mouth of the cave, and through which the smoke was beginning to find its way.

Suddenly the brushwood was dashed outwards, and from among the stifling clouds of smoke which poured forth, the bear charged from the cave. Although we had been expecting him to appear at any moment, when he actually did so we were taken rather aback; and before we could get our rifles to our shoulders, he was already half-way to the bottom of the cañada. Rube's Spencer cracked; but although the flying beast was evidently hit, he did not fall. Will and I fired each several ineffectual shots, and just as the bear was close to some thick chapparal, in which he would have been

safe from pursuit, a lucky shot from the old trapper hit him at the back of the head and knocked him over. He was not yet dead, however: he rolled about trying to rise, but was clearly too much confused by the shot to succeed. Will finished him at close quarters with a bullet through the head, and we then examined our prize. It was an old male cinnamon bear. His teeth were very much worn, as were the claws; but, notwithstanding his age, he was in splendid condition, and his hams were promptly secured by Rube. The pelt was also added to the stores of the trapper. The cinnamon bear is generally almost as dangerous an antagonist as the grizzly, but will, like the latter, choose escape if the way lies open to him, rather than go out of his way to attack. Their mode of life is pretty much the same, so that what has been said of the grizzly is equally applicable to the cinnamon bear.

On returning to camp we found that it had been undisturbed during our absence; but there were several wolves prowling round it, one of which I shot, as the party were loping off on seeing us approach. We were disgusted to find that these vermin had chewed and spoiled whatever articles of leather or hide had been left lying on the ground; but, luckily, we returned in time to prevent further mischief.

CHAPTER VII.

ANCIENT BUILDINGS — SINGULAR FORMATIONS — MESAS — VIEW FROM CLIFFS ABOVE ARAVAYPA CAÑON—SUDDEN FLOOD—RUBE'S ADVENTURE ON THE SALADO—RELICS OF INDIAN SKIRMISH—AN APACHE RANCHERIA—RUBE'S ACCOUNT OF THE MOQUIS AND THE SNAKE DANCE.

Not far from where we were camped we found numerous remains of ancient buildings, all of stone, and of various dimensions. Although time had levelled these monuments of human art, their internal divisions were still easily distinguishable; and around the locality for a little distance was scattered a great quantity of broken pottery, exactly resembling that used by the Pueblo Indians of the present day. These buildings, however, seemed of great antiquity, nor could we discover anything which would indicate that they had been occupied during recent times.

Leaving this picturesque spot, we continued our course along the cañada, which sank deeper and deeper beneath its lofty cliffs as we advanced. Now and then these great walls approached within a short distance of each other, and again receded until the bottom or valley between them was two and occasionally even three miles in breadth. At some points they lost the aspect of cliffs, and became great broken slopes of drift; and not seldom this friable substance was time-worn into quaint forms resembling rude buildings, towers, castles, and other fanciful formations. These singular creations of time and weather were plentifully scat-

WEATHER-WORN ROCKS IN THE "BAD LANDS."

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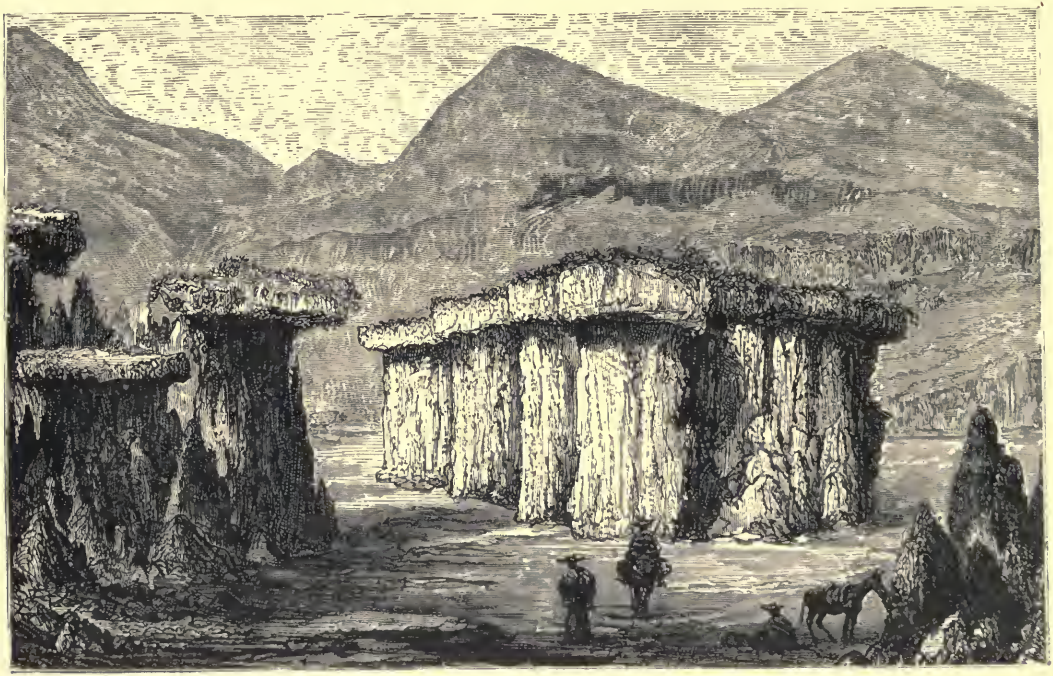
tered along our track; and, in fact, we hardly were once out of sight of them during a considerable part of our journey through this great pass. As we advanced, the mountains gradually drew in closer towards each other, so as to form a cañon, and at one point terminated abruptly in the cliffs which enclosed it. Although the cañada, as has been mentioned, in several places assumes the dimensions of a cañon, it is here that this formation may be properly said to begin.

We made camp at the true entrance of the cañon, underneath the gigantic volcanic cliffs which rose high above us, and whose dark shadows anticipated the gloom of night. As soon as our camp was pitched, Will and I mounted to the summit of the cliffs to view the country. As far as we could see, a desolate wilderness, stony and sterile, stretched away to vagueness. Casting our eyes downwards into the cañon, a delightful contrast was offered by the thread of luxuriant vegetation which clad the gorge, as well as the more open cañada which we had lately traversed. Outside the cañon, the whole country seemed destitute of verdure; not a tree or a particle of grass varied the uniform brown and gray chaos of broken ridges, terraced mountains, and mesas, which extended around on all sides. Some of the latter formations presented five terraces, while on several I counted as many as from eight to twelve successive tables, whose well-marked escarpments rose successively one behind the other. On all this region volcanic energy has been exerted; and from this Titanic force has resulted the extraordinary confusion into which the mountains have been thrown.

The jagged peak and sharply-outlined ledge or ridge were of Plutonic rock thrown high aloft through intervening strata, while over large areas lay a black and shining coat of lava, whose points and edges were still as sharp as at the

moment when their fires congealed to stone. At some distance rose a double-peaked hill, somewhat resembling a saddle; and we learned from Rube that this resemblance has given its name to the mountain. It interposes its bulk between the Aravaypa Cañon and the Rio Gila; and it is probably owing to this obstruction that the Aravaypa River turns from its direct north-west course to south-east, as we could distinguish the grim cleft of the cañon containing the stream winding across the broken mesa country, evidently diverted by Saddle Mountain from its general direction. Over the whole of this vast panorama lay a silence as deep and oppressive as if life had been banished from the earth. The sterile rocks had no inhabitants save the passing eagle, or what reptiles might lurk among them. Wild and barren as these scenes appear, the contemplation of them yields a certain pleasure, although inferior to that experienced in viewing richer prospects. Man has had no share in forming, or rather in deforming, their grand and awful features; his egotism and littleness are rebuked by their sublimity, and he has to recognize a higher power than his own.

The rock-encumbered mesa on which we stood rendered walking difficult; but the rugged beauty of the scenery led us on despite all obstacles, and after scrambling among rocks and up and down declivities for about three miles, we reached a deep cleft or gorge which communicated with the Aravaypa Cañon. We descended into this, and soon returned to our camp, the situation of which we knew, as we could see the high conical peak of Lookout Mountain, which rose above the spot. This hill seems the sentinel placed by Nature to watch the entrance of the pass. It commands the prospect down the cañada we had traversed, as well as that upwards through the cañon for some distance. At some remote period this hill was most probably used for the purpose its name



WATER-ERODED ROCKS IN THE VALLEY OF THE RIO MIMBRES.

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denotes, as we remarked the remains of buildings upon its summit. The foundations still remain, and the general shape of the houses was traceable. At the foot of the mountain a splendid spring, double the volume of the Aravaypa, gushes forth; and it is possible that to its action during ages the existence of the cañon is due. It may, however, be observed that volcanic agency might have originally cracked the crust of the earth, and formed a natural channel for drainage.

Above our camp, for probably two miles, the sides of the cañon present a great contrast to each other, one rising perpendicularly to about the height of five hundred feet, while the other is only a steep slope. Both become precipitous above this point, just at a spot where a vast pyramidal or triangular mass of rock seems completely to close the pass. The cliffs are partly composed of conglomerate or drift for the first few miles of the cañon; but as the descent increases, the sandstone rocks become visible, the precipices rise higher and higher, and finally the hard granite foundation is reached, which forms the bed of the stream.

During the night which we passed under Lookout Mountain we had an excitement. Rube had taken the first watch, and Will and I were sound asleep. We were all at once awakened by the shouts of the old trapper; and, springing to our feet, with our senses in a very disordered state and visions of Indians dancing before our eyes, we beheld the trapper holding on to his macho with might and main, while the other mules, and even Sobersides (the old horse), were straining at their lariats and snorting with terror. We each ran to prevent a stampede; and now for the first time we became aware of a rushing sound from the stream, which, however, we could not see owing to the darkness.

"Them blamed critters," cried Rube, "heerd the nize of

the water and were nigh on vermosin'. I reckon it's one of them freshets as comes no one knows how, and the beasts got skeert with the rushin' of the crick." This was the true explanation of the sudden terror of the animals. The water continued to rise with great rapidity, and the rushing noise which had at first accompanied it now increased to a loud roar as the full flood thundered down the cañon, sweeping trees and bushes from their hold like so much dry straw.

Luckily our camp had been pitched upon the higher side of the bottom, and we were therefore not compelled to change our position; if we had been encamped farther down the cañon, we would have been exposed to great danger by this sudden flood, which gathered volume as it went, and covered the bottom completely at certain points. These sudden and inexplicable floods are one of the mysteries of these western solitudes. Without the slightest previous warning, when there has been no rain to account for them, they suddenly start, apparently out of the ground, and spread ruin and desolation along their course. Trains of emigrants and parties of soldiers out scouting on the high plains have often been exposed to great peril by these unlooked-for floods. In 1873 a company of the United States cavalry was out on a scout when it met with disaster from this cause. The official report of the captain states that the company, to the number of sixty-two, were patrolling the valley of the Republican River; and one day, when there had been no rain for five days previously, a terrible freshet suddenly transformed the whole of Blackwood valley, forty-five miles in length and from a mile to a mile and a half wide, into a raging torrent six or seven feet deep. The camp was swept away, and the soldiers had to betake themselves to trees, which most providentially happened to be at hand, or otherwise the whole company must have perished. As it hap-

pened six men were drowned and twenty-six horses lost. There was no way of accounting for this extraordinary deluge; there had been no rain in the district, and to all appearance a sudden flood of lava might have been as reasonably expected as this prodigious torrent of water. This is one of the dangers of Plains travel, and the explorer must put up with whatever loss or discomfort arises from this source with what philosophy he may.

We remained on the watch for two hours, and were much relieved to find that the water had ceased to rise. The mules had by this time become accustomed to the hoarse thunder of the torrent, and manifested no further symptoms of uneasiness. We therefore again staked them out; and as it was now Will's watch, Rube and I lay down by the fire. The old trapper had had many experiences of sudden freshets, and he gave me the following short account of one which had come on him in the valley of the Salado in Texas not long before our meeting with him:—

"I hev been pretty nigh through every kind of scrimmage with man and beast, fire and water, and a'most areything yer could name," he remarked; "but when I thinks of 'em all, I don't bleeve I ever kem nearer to bein' sent under than by one of them blamed waterspouts. This 'un were bad enough, but it wa'n't a sarcumstance to the one I'm a-goin' to tell yer about.

"I were headin' nor'-west for Santa Fe from Texas, and hed struck the Salado. Jest as I comed to the river, by great good luck I knocked over a fine prong-horn buck; and seein' plenty of float sticks (drift timber) by the edge of the water-holes in the bed of the stream, I jest med my fire thar. The weather had been powerful dry for some weeks a-past; narey a drop of rain hed I seed since leavin' the head of the Brazos, and o' coorse I never took a notion of anything

happenin' this night any more'n any other. So I jest squatted by the fire, arter puttin' out my mule on a small patch of good grass, and took my supper of antelope. When I'd finished I clomb the bank, took a look at my critter, and gev an eye all round for any sign that might be seed; but thar wa'n't nothin'. It were a fine starlight evenin', and tha rwa'n't enough wind to put leeway on a 'skeeter. I thought 'twere a good thing to hev the fire down in the bed of the Salado, for o' coorse the high banks hid it, and any Injuns would hev to come right atop of it afore they seed it or me.

"Wal, I kem back to the fire and wrapped my old carcase up in my blanket, and slipped off to sleep as quiet as arey a child as yer iver seed, I reckon. The last thing I heerd were the 'crop-crop' of my old critter's teeth as she nipped the grass, and at that I fell off. Some time in the night I began to feel cold down my back and legs, and between asleep and awake I shivered and pulled the blanket tighter about me. But 'twere of no use. I soon med out that I were gettin' wet; and at that I thought it were rainin' and thar wa'n't no use in movin', so I lay still dozin'. 'Twa'n't long till I heard an all-fired nize, and I sot up at once't, Injuns bein' my fust notion. My old brain-box were not rightly clear, and I listened to the row, and you bet my ha'r began to rise as I heerd the muss a-comin' nearer. I couldn't make out nohow what it were, nor whether I'd be safer down out o' sight in the bed of the stream, or out on the bank. Jest then I thought of the mule, and I started out to catch her, knowin' the old critter would be as much skeert as myself. I were jest in time, as she hed the picket-pin a'most pulled up, and would hev streaked it over the plain in another shake ef I hedn't comed at that minute. The north were black as thunder, and I noticed lightnin' dartin' and shootin', and the roar of a storm were comin' up fast. I

were wide awake now, and seed it were a waterspout we were goin' to hev. I laid holt of the mule and waited. 'Twa'n't long, you bet, when the storm were upon us, an ice storm at that. Thar were a raal shower of ice, pieces a'most as large as my hand, with edges to 'em like knives, and through this were sich rain as I never seed. The mule wouldn't stand it, and the critter backed and reared so that while trying to keep her from breakin' away we got nearer and nearer to the bank of the Salado. I hed my back to this, and had narey an idee but of keeping holt of the mule; and whether or no, 'twere so dredful dark that thar wa'n't no sich thing as seein' a yard a'most anyway. Wal, the old critter gibbed and backed, carryin' me all around arter her, so that we kem on the edge of the bank, and both on us slipped and fell over.

"'Twa'n't deep, not more than ten foot, but that were enough, I calc'late, to take what senses I hed left out of me. The mule fell across my legs, and by the greatest of good luck, whar we fell were into a water-hole under the bank, and this were about four foot deep. Only for that bit of water, I reckon my legs would hev been snapped like pipe-stems. Anyway I couldn't rise all at once, but held my head above water by holdin' on to the mule's neck. While we were rollin' about this a way, with the ice a-peltin' down upon us, and makin' blood run from my head and face, what shed I hear but the loud roarin' of the Salado, swelled with the storm; and as I were facin' up stream, by the light o' a flash o' lightnin' I seed the water comin' torst us, in a ten-foot wave all stuck over with logs, trees, and bushes! I med one desprit wrench to get loose, and hed pulled my legs from under the mule, when the flood were upon us; and afore I could make one step to the bank, which hyar were not easy to get up even if I hed time to try, we were both

whipped off like chips, and rolled over and over. I gin up 'twere all over with me. I were so bamfoozled with the peltin' of ice-chunks, and with bein' a'most drownded besides, that I hardly moved a hand to try to save myself. I got badly hit with the logs; and once I got squeezed atween two trees, and as they heeled over in the flood I were drawed under water, and ef they hadn't been washed asunder ag'in I'd never hev comed alive to the surface. The mule I never seed ag'in. I dunno what happened to the critter, exceptin', o' coorse, that she were drownded; thar can't be any doubt about that. I hed one hand over a log of cotton-wood 'ithout thinkin' like of what I were doin'. The action were nat'ral, I suppose, and this kep' me from goin' down. My hips were a'most paralized with the squeeze they got when the mule fell with me over the bank, and on trying to strike out with my legs, I found they wouldn't work nohow. So I jest scooted along with the front o' the flood, and the way I got over the ground were a caution to see, I guess. Thar were huge rocks scattered along the bed of the Salado, and as often as I seed one o' them, I thort I'd be smashed ag'in it; but allers the water riz over it with a fierce rushing roar, and I'd be swep' over it with a swing like takin' a jump on a good hoss. And all the time the storm kep' on: the lightnin' whizzed through the thick drive of ice and rain, and the way the great pieces of ice fell into the water all around were like bein' pelted wi' big donnicks. Once't or twice I got a blow on the head as med fire flash out of my eyes, and afterwards I'd feel faint and sick, as much with the blow as with the wheelin' around of everything and the surgin' and eddyin' of the flood. I were wonderin' how long I could hold out when I seed that one bank of the Salado p'inted out very far into the bed of the stream, and at the end were some trees with thar branches hanging out so as I could grab 'em.

I jest watched my chance, and as the flood reached 'em I laid holt. The water riz ag'in me jest as if I hed been a rock, and the weight and rush swayed the branches down till I feared they'd break. Howsomever they didn't, and I hauled myself out. Seein' as the bank hyar were so high that the water didn't reach the top altogether, owin' to the other side bein' low so that the freshet spread far out over the plain, I throwed myself down with a feelin' of thankfulness at my escape, and I kinder think I must hev fainted. Anyhow, I don't rightly remember what happened for some time, when I were found by a stock-raiser, who, luckily for me, were lookin' for some cattle that hed strayed. Thar were no denyin' the whole thing were blamed ugly, and I hed as narrer an escape as I ever hed in my life."

Rube's odd adventure was narrated in a deep, droning voice, which, combined with the fatigues of the day, produced a drowsiness that completely overpowered me. I could hear the trapper still speaking and illustrating the dangers of camping near Plains rivers, with examples from his own experience; but I had heard enough, and soon was deaf to his stories. We passed the night in tranquillity, and we therefore felt refreshed and ready to start as soon as the flushed sky overhead announced that the sun had already risen above the horizon.

It was evident that a large party had recently passed through the cañon, as a track had been cleared, and many trees and bushes bore the mark of the axe. This was a most convenient circumstance for us, as it saved us a great deal of labour. We accordingly pushed on quickly, and as the place was eminently suited for the purposes of Indian ambuscade, we kept unusually on the alert, in expectation of seeing savages lurking among the cliffs. At one point an immense block of rock fell with a thundering crash and startled us

not a little, as we attributed its fall to Indians; but we saw none. Towards evening we halted at a spot where the north side of the cañon was hollowed out, forming a kind of cavern; and we here saw tokens of a fight which had not long previously taken place between Indians and a party of Californians who were on their way to the east to take part in the great civil war. Skulls and other human remains lay scattered about; the greater part of which, if not the whole, were those of the Aravaypa Apaches who had fallen.

The sight of these grim tokens of danger was not calculated to raise our spirits; but as the position was an eminently good one in case of a night attack, we made our camp under the scooped-out cliff, well secured against rocks falling from above. This spot was the site of an Apache settlement, or rancheria, and we could trace the remains of the acequias, or irrigating canals, which they had made to conduct the water of the stream to their garden plots.

Deep down in the bowels of the earth, at the bottom of these stupendous cañons, daylight yields to a gloomy twilight much earlier than above; it is therefore needful to camp betimes in order to have the necessary preparations completed before darkness sets in.

We made our fire in the gallery-like cave, and as night fell its bright reflection lit up the recess and gave it an appearance of coziness which was quite exhilarating. The little clearing made by the Apaches afforded pasture for our mules, and as the coffee-kettle bubbled and boiled, and the ribs of an antelope which Rube had shot sputtered over the glowing embers, I thought that after all there were worse places than our bivouac in the depths of the Aravaypa cañon. We would have been perfectly happy, I think, were it not for the haunting thought that at any moment we might be a

mark for a shower of arrows and bullets from some outlying band of Apaches. We were fortunate, however, in passing through this cañon shortly after the massacre of the Aravaypa Apaches by the Californian volunteers. Indeed, had it not been for this, we could not possibly have attempted to travel by this route. On that occasion, out of a total number of about seventy, only twelve savages escaped. This band was a terror to the whole country, owing to the many atrocities which they had committed, and their destruction was hailed with universal satisfaction.

Rube, who, as has been said, had visited most of the Indian tribes of the south-west, gave us some information about that interesting people the Moquis, which I insert here, in addition to some derived from other sources,* as it can hardly fail to interest the reader. I drop the old trapper's peculiar idiom; but his narrative, I believe, accurately details one of the most extraordinary customs in existence at the present day among the aborigines of the American continent, as well as affords some information relative to the Moquis, who are perhaps the most interesting of existing tribes in the United States.

The Moquis country is, roughly speaking, bounded on the east by the line which separates New Mexico from Arizona, the 109th meridian; south and west it is bounded by the Colorado Chiquito, and it lies some sixty miles southwards from the great Colorado River of the west. As has been noticed in a former chapter, the towns or pueblos of the Moquis are seven in number; they are all built upon the summits of sandstone precipices, and are absolutely impregnable against the assaults of any tribes with which the Moquis might be at war. These "towns" are distributed

* I am indebted to Captain Bourke's interesting work, "The Snake Dance of the Moqui Indians," for many of the particulars in this chapter.

over the country as follows: three are located in a small district close to each other on the eastern mesa; their names are Suchongnewy, Hano (otherwise Tegua), and Hualpi. At a distance of about seven miles, across an extensive valley in which dry sands alternate with the corn, melon, and bean fields of these wild farmers, rises the precipitous promontory on which are built the picturesque towns of Mushangnewy, Shupolewy, and about three miles further back, the fort of Sumopowy. Ten miles from the last named place, on the top of a high bluff, lies the town of Oraybe, whose inhabitants disdain intercourse with their fellow-tribesmen in the other villages. These names are perhaps indicative of the staple commodities raised in the neighbourhood of each place. Thus the word "Shupolewy" is supposed to mean peaches, which fruit is produced in abundance at that pueblo. If this inference be correct, it is not irrational to suppose that the names of the other towns similarly indicate the nature of their chief products.

The designation by which the Moquis refer to themselves is Opii; they use, however, another name, Shumi, which is regarded as a sacred word, and is probably that by which they refer to themselves in religious services.

All the tribes which cut the hair straight across the forehead are considered by the Moquis to come of a common stock with themselves. On the eastern mesa there are a great number of deserted and ruined villages which were no doubt once inhabited by this people. I have elsewhere given some statistics of the decrease which has taken place in their numbers since the end of the last century. The Moquis are divided into bands, each of which is ruled by a chief or "cacique;" three caciques appoint a "mungwee," an officer who may be supposed to bear some affinity with the mayor of civilized communities: he holds his position for periods

varying from one to two years. The clans or subdivisions of the tribe live in a portion of the town allocated to them; this is in fact their "ward," and on public occasions they depute members to represent them. Each of these representatives bears the "totem" of his proper band or *gens*, and this serves to distinguish the various parties who engage in the national dances, religious ceremonies, or public games. This custom, however, is not invariably followed, and in fact is deviated from on one of the most solemn of all their ceremonies, that of the "snake dance," when absolute uniformity is required by their priests, or medicine-men. Delegates from other pueblos, however, often attend.

The system in vogue among the Moquis of dividing their nation into many distinct clans, each with its totemic designation, as The Bears, The Eagles, The Badgers, etc., has had a singular effect on their internal policy and tribal regulations. A Moqui child is held to belong to the gens of the mother, and not to that of the father; all the children of any one gens are regarded as brothers and sisters, and marriages between them are consequently forbidden, although connections are made between individuals who according to our ideas would be too closely related. On his marriage the man goes to reside in the wife's house; and although his marriage does not occasion a change of gens on his part, his children belong to the gens of the mother. Among the Moquis the lady has the privilege of choosing her husband, and has a corresponding right to get rid of him if he is not satisfactory on further acquaintance! Any property which the mother possesses at the time of her death goes to her daughters.

The dress of the Moquis consists of cotton and woollen garments gaily coloured, and often ornamented with fringes or tassels. It bears a close resemblance to that in use among the Zunis, and altogether seems to be more suited to

a quiet sedentary people than to such warlike tribes as the Apaches.

The most singular of the ceremonies among the Moquis is the snake-dance, a religious observance which is equally astonishing and disgusting to the civilized spectator. The ceremony is commenced in the estufa, before alluded to, a kind of cellar lighted only from above. Just before the dance begins, the snakes, hitherto secured in large ollas or jars of earthenware, are liberated, and crawl over the floor, but are prevented from wandering too freely by some of the older men, who wave them back. Confined in a small space, the slimy creatures present a loathsome spectacle; some knotted together in a horrible entanglement instinct with life and motion, and others in every attitude—straight, crooked, or sinuous. Some essay to scale the walls of their prison, gradually working their way to an erect position until only the tips of their tails touch the floor, when they slip backwards and fall with a heavy sodden sound upon the writhing mass of their fellows which covers the ground round about. From this swarm of venomous vermin there arises a peculiarly foul and disgusting effluvium, which the onlooker must have a strong stomach to endure for more than a minute or two at a time.

When the dance is about to begin, the restraint imposed on the reptiles is removed, the railings, which are part of the furniture of the chamber, are thrown down, and what may be considered a kind of altar is dismantled, and the snakes are at liberty to crawl more at will over the area of the estufa. In front of the altar is now placed a plain earthenware bowl covered with a white cotton cloth and containing water with which some salt has been mixed and some sea-shells. By this time the chamber is crowded with both old and young, busily engaged in preparing themselves for the

approaching ceremony by painting their bodies and getting ready the different articles necessary. During this interval the snakes crawl about on one side of the estufa, but are prevented from straying too far by two old men who recline upon the floor, and to all appearance seem indifferent to everything around them. But this abstraction is only apparent. If a reptile evinces a desire to leave the side of the estufa to which it is confined, these mute guardians spring to their feet and brush it back with wands tipped with eagles' feathers. Of these implements the snakes evince considerable dread; which is accounted for by the supposition that as the eagle is the natural enemy of the reptile the latter recognizes the feathers, and, apprehensive of danger, wishes to escape. There may be some truth in this, as almost invariably the sight of them seems to inspire the reptile with fear. If, however, a snake be found to disregard the taps of the magic wands, he is deftly seized behind the head and conveyed, writhing and twisting, back to his proper quarters. The reader may suppose that these snakes have been deprived of their poison-fangs, as is sometimes done by Indian serpent-charmers to impose on the spectators of their arts. This, however, is certainly not the case with the sacred snakes of the Moquis, which are chiefly rattlesnakes, such as are met with every day in the country; and the old men who have charge of them are evidently guarded in their dealings with them, touching them gently and avoiding exciting them, with scrupulous care.

Great quiet is imposed upon those present at the "snake-herding," as this preliminary ceremony may be called. Loud talking is strictly forbidden, and if any one present has occasion to speak he must do so in a very low tone and as briefly as possible. The crowd, therefore, is grave, orderly, and sedate; every one seems to know exactly what he is to do·

and how he is to do it, and there is an absence of that confusion and noise which would certainly take place among an equal number of white people assembled together for any important purpose.

The apparent absence of dread of the reptiles, on the part of their custodians, is very remarkable. Young and old handle them with equal indifference; but, as I have stated, they do this quietly, deftly, and cautiously. Sometimes a young man will be observed bringing in a fresh supply of snakes to add to those already collected, and for convenience of transport he places them in a sack or bag slung over his shoulder. Sometimes persons may be seen carrying the repulsive reptiles in their hands. In this case, however, the snakes are firmly and yet lightly grasped close behind the head with the left hand, the operator's thumb being extended in such a manner as to prevent the reptile from getting his head round; and meanwhile the right hand is employed in stroking and soothing him, by being gently passed along the undulating body from the neck to the rattles at the tail. This motion of the hand is useful in two ways. It keeps the snake mollified and prevents it from coiling itself, which is a symptom of belligerency not to be lightly regarded, even by a Moqui medicine-man. Should this untoward event happen, the person carrying the snake receives assistance from the older individuals among the medicine-men, who are looked up to by the gens to which they belong with the most profound respect. These hoary priests of a hideous fetish are distinguished by a string of small shells of a peculiar kind, worn upon the wrist; and these sacred symbols are never assumed by the warriors of the tribe, except perhaps by some few who have earned the gratitude and homage of all by great public services.

As the moment for the commencement of the dance ap-

proaches, the snakes are taken hold of and put into bags of cotton cloth or of buckskin, no fear or trepidation being discernible on the faces of those engaged in the task. Naked, with the exception of a cloth round their waists, even without moccasins, these apparently reckless operators seize the snakes, sometimes singly, sometimes by twos, walking about the while among the numerous reptiles, and even occasionally trampling on them as they wriggle and undulate over the floor. All this is done with the most perfect nonchalance. But wonderful as this performance is, it is far excelled by the apparent recklessness of the old men, who, to show a visitor their power over the venomous reptiles, have been known to gather them up in bundles from the floor, and even to carry them wriggling and writhing between their teeth!

The snakes are next carried outside the estufa, and great is the relief of any white spectator at again reaching the open air. The handling of the snakes seems to intensify the nauseousness of the stench which they give forth; and in addition to this, the rancid odour of the pigment used by the actors in the adornment of their persons, together with the smell of heated and filthy humanity in the confined atmosphere of the semi-subterranean estufa, combine to produce a fetor which only the most vivid imagination can figure or the strongest stomach endure.

Outside, everybody is in holiday attire. Festivity and gaiety, tempered by a certain religious gravity, seem universal. The subdued hum of many voices fills the air, and expectation is on tiptoe. The present fashion in use among ladies of cutting the hair square across the forehead may have originated among the Moquis. It is at least a coincidence that this fashion became prevalent about the time that the Moqui country was rendered accessible to visitors by the extension of the railways. The men who await the sallying forth of

the procession have their hair very trimly arranged, and cut neatly and squarely across the eye-brows, and backwards at each side level with the mouth. Behind, it is tucked up into a kind of pigtail, wound about with red worsted threads. The married women have their hair somewhat differently dressed. The chief distinction consists in having it parted either in the centre or at one side. Maidens have their own peculiar method of hair-dressing, which at least presents a curious appearance, and certainly forms an unmistakable advertisement that they are not as yet appropriated. The female portion of the crowd are clad in a dark blue cloth, relieved with lemon-coloured stitching, which is at once simple and womanly; variety is given by blankets of different hues, scarlet and blue being those most favoured. They are further adorned with red and green girdles, and have necklaces of silver, of coral, chalcedony, and abalone. The scene which Rube described took place at the pueblo of Hualpi; and on the occasion of the ceremony delegates were sent by the various other Moqui towns throughout the country, as well as by the Navajoes, who, however, came merely out of curiosity, as they do not partake in the religious rites of their neighbours.

At length the great moment is at hand. The approach of the procession is heralded by a loud whirring noise like the rattling of pease in a child's toy. This proceeds from the arcade, and announces the fact that the dancers, provided with gourds filled with corn, sheep's toes strung together to form rattles, etc., are approaching.

In advance walks an elder of the tribe without moccasins, his head encircled with a crown of leaves, and carrying a red earthenware vessel filled with water, with which he asperses the ground. Another ancient carries a basket containing Indian corn meal. A third stretches his left hand towards

a necklace of bear claws, and with the other hand shakes a rattle shaped like the letter T and painted white.

Behind these walk five men in single file carrying similar rattles. These functionaries, however, only fill a secondary position, and are not looked upon as performing so sacred a rite as those who precede them. At an interval of five paces come a number of little boys averaging probably five years of age, walking one behind the other, and each carrying a white T-shaped rattle; and at a similar distance behind comes an old man bearing upright in his left hand a mystic bow gaudily ornamented with tufts of horse-hair and feathers, and swinging in his right hand an instrument somewhat like a sling, from which proceeds a whirring sound. This portion of the procession forms the first detachment of the dancers.

The second batch now advances. It is composed of forty-eight individuals, all males; two are children. All carry in both hands wands furnished with eagle feathers, with the exception of one person, the last of the party, who bears a bow exactly similar to that carried by another individual in the first division. Each has tortoise-shell and sheep and goat-toe rattles secured to his right knee; and these make a weird sound at every motion of the wearers, which accentuates the "uncanny" impression produced by the whole spectacle.

Tufts of scarlet feathers are worn at the top of the head by the members of this procession. Their coarse black hair hangs loose between the shoulders, and every face is painted black down to the level of the upper lip. The contrast offered by the mouth and the portions of the face painted with kaolin produces a hideous and startling effect.

Most of them wear collars of small white sea-shells resembling beads, as well as abalone shells. Strings of similar shells are slung like a sash from the left hip across the breast over the right shoulder. They are all naked with the ex-

ception of coloured cotton kilts reaching to the knee, and skins of the fox and coyote which hang down behind. Their legs, bodies, and arms are of a uniform greenish black. But the variety of their adornment can hardly interest the reader.

Both detachments of dancers parade gravely round the "sacred stone," keeping between this mysterious object and the medicine-lodge and sacred tree. The first portion of the procession forms itself into a line, one end resting by the tree, and in front of it stands one of the old medicine-men, holding in his hands the dish containing water and a wand ornamented with eagle feathers. The second detachment forms itself into a corresponding line fronting the first, and separated from it by about four yards. Those who have rattles shake them gently, making a noise very closely resembling the pattering of rain on dry leaves; and those who hold the eagle-feather wands wave them to and fro in unison with the shaking of the rattles. This is continued for a short time, the movements of the rattles and wands being accompanied by a kind of refrain sung by all the members of the procession, each stamping violently on the ground in time with the cadence. At this point the old medicine-man by the tree begins to pray aloud with great distinctness and decorum, and asperses the ground with water, the second officiating medicine-man dusting corn meal about. The second division of the procession now moves out of line and proceeds by a series of strange high steps to make the circuit of the sacred rock, imitating the method of sowing corn, to the music of a dismal chorus from the other party.

Twenty squaws, both married and unmarried, tricked out in white and scarlet robes, now come forward, each carrying a vessel filled with meal, with which they strew the ground in all directions. This finishes the first portion of the

ceremony. No. 1 division still remains drawn up in line, its medicine-man praying in a loud voice; and while the prayer is being recited the other division leaves the ground, marches to the arcade, and presently returns, two and two, the left-hand files carrying snakes in their hands and in their mouths! The heads of the reptiles project to the right of the bearer, and at this side is the second file, each provided with the eagle wands before mentioned, with which they gently stroke the heads and necks of the snakes, whose slimy wriggling bodies are secured between the teeth of their bearers!

The long line of greenish-black savages, naked except for the kilts, the fox tails, and moccasins which they wear, their faces grim and partially painted black and dirty white, their scarlet top-knots and coarse stringy hair carried straight out behind the head, their knee-rattles clattering as they prance along, while their loathsome charges writhe and twist between their teeth, or flop heavily against their breasts, presents one of the most hideous and demon-like spectacles to be beheld among savages in any country at the present day.

When this party reaches the end of what may be called their parade-ground, they drop the snakes and resume their position by the sacred tree, rock, and medicine-lodge, stamping twice with the left leg, at the same moment uttering a grunting sound.

The female performers extend themselves over the arena: some stand on a terrace immediately above the arcade, some stand on ladders near an archway, and the remainder, constituting the greater number, occupy a position between the sacred rock and the medicine-lodge, with three exceptions. These last stand at the extreme eastern end of the ground. All bear the gaudily-painted baskets in the manufacture of

which the Moquis are so expert. They are painted red, yellow, and black, and are further ornamented with recognizable likenesses of butterflies, deer, and other creatures. These baskets are beautifully made. Those used in the ceremony are filled to the edge with corn meal, or rather with corn flour; and this is flung about in handfuls on the ground, into the air, and also upon the snakes. While engaged in this rite the squaws accompany their actions with prayer, as their lips may be seen to move and muttered sounds may be heard.

Great significance is attributed to this aspersion of the ground, the air, the priests, and the reptiles with flour. The Zuñi Indians are lavish in their offerings of it on these occasions; and there are few houses in the whole country in which a small bowl of the mystic meal may not be observed, from which the worshipper takes a small portion to throw towards the east at rising in the morning.

As the squaws asperse the snakes with the flour, the reptiles are lifted by one of the individuals provided with an eagle-feather wand and are taken to the line of No. 1 division, which still retains its place near the medicine-lodge. Here they are received mostly by the little boys who, it will be remembered, formed part of the procession, but are immediately transferred by them to a medicine-man who had officiated as high priest, and this individual in his turn places them in the sacred lodge. In this way the whole of the snakes are taken from the ground and carried to this sanctuary, no other difference being observable than that after the first ceremonious translation of the reptiles every man carries at least one in his mouth, and some enthusiasts even contrive to carry two! At this point of the proceedings the highest excitement prevails; the air is filled with flour till it seems misty as with a drifting shower of finely-powdered

snow. The ground is covered with it, and through it wriggle and undulate the snakes that have been dropped, and these are also specially sprinkled with the mystic dust. Round about the sacred rock perambulates the procession, and as they march their enthusiasm seems to increase; thicker falls the flour-drift, and the more freely are the reptiles handled, many now cramming two between their teeth; but still the feather-bearers continue to titillate them with their wands, and the flour-sprinklers dust them liberally.

When they are all deposited in the medicine-lodge, a circular space is marked out by a ring of corn meal scattered on the ground. The reptiles are again brought forth and placed within this circle, and are completely smothered in meal; during which operation the chief medicine-man prays devoutly. After this the final scene is enacted. The snake-bearers again approach and seize the reptiles, which they carry with the speed of the wind to the edge of the mesa. They descend with extraordinary agility, and at the bottom release their dangerous charges to go in whatever direction they please.

While this is being done, No. 1 division makes the circuit of the sacred rock and lodge, the medicine-man belonging to the party; who, the reader will recollect, carried a kind of sling, which he whirled about to create a whizzing noise. To the rhythm of this the procession circles the rock and lodge twice, and on arriving for the second time in front of the rock, each member of the party stamps upon the ground with the right foot.

During the whole ceremony the number of snakes handled is about one hundred, and these reptiles are passed from one to the other by the dancers at least four times. It is a miracle that no accident occurs, and it is impossible that they always escape being bitten. It is stated, however, that

in the event of any one being bitten, they have a certain remedy which obviates any danger arising from such an accident.

Rube's account was very circumstantial. The old trapper had had many opportunities of seeing the dance both among the Moquis of Hualpi and at other pueblos; and no doubt, if occasion required, he would be competent to act as chief medicine-man himself. At any rate, no religious prejudices would operate to restrain him.

CHAPTER VIII.

SUDDEN ARRIVAL OF A TRAPPER—APACHES—ABANDON OUR PLANS—THE PURSUIT —"CLEARING OUT"—CAMP—DISCOVERED—FLIGHT—"CORNERED"—THE FIGHT—COCHISE, THE APACHE CHIEF—THE PARLEY—TREACHERY—RETREAT OF THE APACHES—OUR LAST SKIRMISH.

NEXT morning an incident occurred which changed all our plans. We were seated, according to our daily custom, round the fire, drinking our coffee and speculating on our day's proceedings, when we were very much astonished to see a man coming down the cañon towards us at the fastest pace at which he could get his mule to carry him. His whole appearance was disordered, and we instantly perceived he was flying from some imminent danger. The moment he saw us he pulled up with a jerk; but observing that we were whites he came up to the fire.

"I guess I thought 'twere out of the frying-pan into the fire with me," he said. "The Injines air riz, and I have streaked it from a band of the cussed varmints. Ye'll hev to move out of hyar, you bet; thar's a hundred of 'em arter me if thar's one, and they'll be up by hyar purty speedy!"

This was nice news for us. We had been free from apprehension of attack for a few days, and hoped to get through our journey with no further unpleasantness; but we were now thrown into the greatest excitement by this unlooked-for news, and in "the shortest time on record" we had our

animals packed and were retreating down the cañon on our tracks.

Our new acquaintance was a trapper and prospector, and had been for the previous three months pursuing his dangerous calling actually surrounded by hostile savages who would have desired nothing better than to catch him and roast him alive. He had been very fortunate in avoiding discovery until within the hour preceding his sudden appearance at our camp, and had been chased by the Indians "on sight," though fortunately for him he had had a long start.

We moved off with considerable rapidity, and I thought with a very uncomfortable feeling of the long trail which led over the desert mesas, and through mountain gorges to the far distant Rio Grande. Will and I decided to push on day and night, and to lose not an instant until we again attained the comparatively secure regions of the New Mexican Settlements. The reader must not think we were very easily diverted from our original intention of exploring the most interesting of the pueblos and ruins in Southern and Central Arizona. The Indian rising on this occasion was on a very large scale, and the routes west and north were rendered extremely hazardous. To come for pleasure and to stay for fighting did not recommend itself to us as either agreeable or rational, and we therefore "backed out" of the country with what the stay-at-home reader may consider as undignified precipitation. We had afterwards the satisfaction of knowing that we saved our scalps by this swift retreat, as nearly every white on the route we traversed fell into the hands of the savages, and suffered the usual fate of being scalped and tortured.

The first night after receiving intelligence of the rising, our desire for gaining safe quarters was, if possible, intensified by a sudden attack; and as this was nearly the last

occasion on which we had a brush with the savages, I will describe it.

Our camp was pitched in the cañada before mentioned leading up into the Aravaypa Cañon. We took particular pains to choose a spot so well sheltered that no prying eye could detect it. But in this hope of escaping discovery we were doomed to disappointment. Our mules, hard-ridden and hungry as they were, we kept close to us; but we cut and pulled some armfuls of grass, which we threw before them, although this was but a poor substitute for the free range they would have enjoyed had we been otherwise circumstanced. We had travelled late by the ghostly light of a young moon, which was waning in the west, casting long dark shadows wherever her beams could penetrate. It was about twelve o'clock when we turned at right angles from the direct path and rode for some distance in a zigzag course among young cedars and other thick, umbrageous trees, until our further progress was arrested by the steep, sloping sides of the cañada. Here we found a small open spot covered with some tall grass, and, as has already been said, we pulled and cut some armfuls of it for our jaded animals. We made a small fire, guarding it carefully by piling about it our packs and crowding round it ourselves, so as to circumscribe its light as much as possible. We considered this an excess of caution; but, as the event proved, it was ineffectual. Some prowler must have been sent up Lookout Mountain, at the junction of the cañon with the cañada, to descry any vestiges of the party, whose well-marked trail must, of course, have been discovered when the band of savages in pursuit of the trapper came to the spot at which we had camped. The darkness prevented them from following our track, but knowing that as long as we were within the cañon we must perforce keep to the bottom,

they pushed on at speed, not troubling themselves about the trail. At the junction of the cañon with the cañada they perceived that we had a choice of routes open to us, and they rightly guessed that we would be camped somewhere within view of the lofty summit of Lookout Mountain, whose peak I could dimly discern over the top of the thicket surrounding our fire. It did not occur to us that they would send a vidette to that point to look out for a possible fire; but this they did, with the result of discovering our whereabouts. There was a circumstance, which we did not learn until afterwards, that saved us from certain death. On seeing the flying trapper gain the entrance of the Aravaypa Cañon, two-thirds of the band, numbering about seventy-five, gave up the chase, leaving the remainder of their body to attempt the capture of the fugitive. They had a more important enterprise on foot, and did not wish to expose their expedition to a hazardous delay, which might enable the United States troops to come on the scene to prevent its execution. The greater number, therefore, of the savages turned aside from the pursuit, leaving only about twenty-five to secure the trapper, whom they did not doubt they would cut off somewhere within the cañon. Had the whole body come upon us, nothing could have saved us from certain destruction.

We set watches as usual, the first being taken by the strange trapper. As may be supposed, we enjoyed but little repose; and although the great fatigue we had undergone caused sleep, it was a broken one, and several times I started up, while vague fears and disturbing dreams prevented me from obtaining much rest. The second watch was taken by Rube; and it was at this time that the extreme uneasiness of the mules, together with the too frequently repeated calls of night-birds, attracted the attention and aroused the

suspicions of the old hunter. He quietly awoke us and communicated his fears. We agreed that if our camp had been discovered, it was most probable that the savages would endeavour to surround us; which their numbers, of course, would render an easy task. The route down the cañada, as it presented no difficulty to their advance, we supposed already overrun by them, and the back trail up the cañon we could only take as a *dernier ressort*. There remained the slope behind us, up which we thought we could lead the mules. We agreed that to remain where we were would be little short of madness, surrounded as we were by a thick growth of chapparal, which offered concealment to our enemies, while we would be exposed to their fire in the small clearing where we had encamped.

The mules were packed quickly and without noise; not a word was spoken; each worked at his own pack-animal, and in a very few minutes we were ready to move. We left the spot in single file, and threaded the thick underbrush with the greatest caution. But, despite our care, the packs brushed against the tree stems and branches, making a loud, rustling sound, which in the deep silence could be heard for some distance. We pushed on, however, with the greatest expedition compatible with caution, and soon found that we were approaching the crest of the slope. Here we emerged from the shelter of the trees, and took our way over broken, difficult ground, where the sharp ringing of the mules' shoes against the rocks immediately brought us to a halt, while Rube and the trapper wrapped buckskins round their hoofs. We stood upon the highest point of the elevated slope, which fell rapidly downwards into the bottom of the cañada; and from the heavy shade which filled it, Will and I, who had stepped up to a rocky point to command a better view, could hear the occasional snap of a twig, proceeding appa-

rently from the chapparal near our fire. The faint glow of this was visible through the tops of the trees, showing us, when too late, that well hidden as we had conceived it to be, it was in reality not so.

All at once from the "bottom" rose a chorus of terrible yells: the savages had reached the fire and found their victims gone. We immediately remounted our mules and hastened away, but had not gone two hundred yards when we found our progress barred by a deep barranca that yawned black and dismal across the route, looking like a river of ink, so gloomy were its shadows and so well defined its banks. Right and left, as far as we could see in the imperfect light, this huge fissure extended. Rube, who led, turned his mule at right angles and followed the chasm, in the hope of finding some point at which we could descend. For nearly half an hour we struggled among rocks and boulders of every shape and size, the mules, encumbered with their foot-wrappings, stumbling and falling, and throwing off their packs, thus causing us the greatest anxiety lest the delay, as well as the noise which we unavoidably made, might enable the savages to trace us. At several points the narrow track which we followed, hemmed in by inaccessible rocks, led close to the brink of the profound abyss; and as we passed slowly along by these dangerous places we could look straight down past our feet into the barranca. The least stumble on the part of a mule would have precipitated both itself and its rider into the jaws of certain destruction.

Shortly after passing the last of these ledges, an exclamation from Rube caused us to push to the front, with an undefined apprehension of some further danger. Here we perceived that the barranca ran into the Aravaypa Cañada at a spot where the sides of the latter were formed by precipitous cliffs! We were, in fact, hemmed in on right

and left and in front by unscalable chasms, and had no option but to retreat or to stay where we were. After some deliberation we resolved to remain: the savages might not be able to follow our trail over the rocky ground which we had encountered immediately after leaving the crest of the cañada at the beginning of our retreat; in which case we would have merely to stay quietly where we were until the coast was clear. If they followed us, the place was well suited for defence. We could only be attacked in front, and on this side there was a natural ridge of rock almost like a low wall, which would make a splendid breastwork. It would require, we thought, fully a hundred Apaches to take our position, unless they charged us simultaneously, which we hoped they would not do.

We dismounted and stood anxiously expecting the appearance of the savages over the rocky ridges which jutted above the general level like the broken billows of a storm-tossed ocean. We could dimly discern their outlines; and I often fancied that I could detect the crouching figure of an Apache peering from behind the shelter of a ridge, and almost expected to see the flash of his rifle at each moment. These were, of course, tricks of imagination; but these fancied apparitions kept my nerves in a condition of tension which was anything but pleasant. It is the prolonged waiting for attack that preys on the nerves. Many men who would face visible danger boldly, become excited and apprehensive as the weary hours drag on; their nerves cannot withstand the strain, and they finally become an easy prey to a sudden panic.

As the time passed without bringing any news of the enemy, we began to get impatient. Hoskins, the strange trapper, volunteered to reconnoitre, and we presently saw his dim form skulking from rock to rock, making a short

stay at each in order to listen for any sign of danger. He was soon lost to view; and we then stood silent and expectant, listening intently for some sound which might indicate the approach of the savages. Now and then we heard the distant cry of a coyote or the hoot of an owl, but we were uncertain whether to consider them as signals of the Indians or as made by the creatures themselves. An hour passed in this state of anxiety, and as yet we had not heard anything of our scout. Rube was about to start out with the intention of ascertaining what had detained him, when we saw him suddenly spring over the ridge or breastwork of rock which has been mentioned, and make towards us at the top of his speed. "They're comin!" he exclaimed, as soon as he saw us. "They'll be hyar in a quarter of an hour at latest. We're in a nice kind of trap, I guess, and thar ain't no sort o' doubt them varmints knows it."

We held a hurried consultation as to our defence. The affair was very simple, owing to the absence of alternatives. We could not escape, and therefore the only thing to be done was to fight.

As has been said, the barranca joined the Aravaypa Cañada, and it was at the point of junction that we were now placed. On either hand yawned deep gulfs, which we could not descend; but then, on the other hand, their precipitous sides could not be ascended by the enemy; we were therefore unassailable in flank or rear, and had to defend ourselves only on the front of our position. This was protected by a rugged line of rocks, scalable only at the point where we had entered this natural fortress, close to the brink of the chasm. Owing to this formation of the ground we were enabled to concentrate our fire on this particular point, and it is to this circumstance our final escape was due.

We took the mules close to the brink of the Aravaypa Cañada, under the high rocks which formed the terminal point of our breastwork, where they were quite out of the line of fire. We tied them securely, and having done what we could for their safety, we took up our positions and awaited the coming of the enemy. It would be difficult to describe my feelings at this time. I heartily wished myself anywhere else; I condemned my folly very sincerely for having ever come into such a barbarous country; but nevertheless I kept my eyes fixed on the narrow track that led by the verge of the barranca to the spot at which I was posted, and held my rifle to my shoulder as I leaned, half-lying, against the rocks, ready with "high resolve" to do or die. There was a considerable amount of romance in the position of four men assailed on the brink of precipices, in the darkness of night, by six times their number of implacable savages. I had read Fenimore Cooper, and recollected with a grim kind of amusement the desire his descriptions had often excited in my verdant mind to share the perils of the wilderness. I cannot say that I congratulated myself on the accomplishment of these wishes.

A quarter of an hour passed, and no savages appeared. Rube and Hoskins were amusing themselves with "cussin' the varmints," and promising them a warm welcome; Will and I lay crouched side by side, each straining eye and ear, and occasionally muttering our surprise at the delay. We lay thus for a long time; certainly two hours elapsed, and we felt stiff and very cold with our uncomfortable vigil. Either the Apaches knew the great strength of our position and were afraid to venture on us, or they were delaying in order to make us suppose that we had effectually baffled their pursuit. Whatever was their motive, the delay, although trying and irksome, was very fortunate, as it

deferred the attack until break of day, when the light enabled us to aim with accuracy.

The eastern heavens had for some little time been flushed with the coming sunrise, and objects were each moment becoming more distinct, when Will, whose eyes were sharper than mine, drew my attention to a movement which he said he had perceived among the jutting points of rock at about one hundred and fifty yards from our position. I looked attentively, and in the twilight I observed several Apaches spring from rock to rock, pausing behind each in succession; and we could see their swarthed faces cautiously raised above their shelter, reconnoitring for a further advance. The moment of the attack was at length at hand, and I could hear the beating of my heart as I pressed my rifle to my shoulder and waited for a chance.

Fifty yards nearer to us lay a huge detached boulder: this I felt would be availed of in the next rush of the savages, and I kept my eye on the rock, expecting to see one or more of them peeping from behind it. In this I was not disappointed. Hardly had I shifted the direction of my rifle-barrel by a slight movement of my arm when I saw the copper-coloured visage of an Apache staring over the top of the boulder, the ruddy gleam of dawn falling on him and heightening the natural hue of his face. It was an excellent mark; but I felt my blood thrill unpleasantly at having to slay a fellow-creature, although justifiably in self-defence. The savage did not see us, as we were well shielded by the rocks, and yet had a perfect view through a kind of natural embrasure formed by a fissure or "crenelle" at the junction of two large masses. I pressed the butt of my trusty Winchester to my shoulder, took a steady aim at the shining disc, and pulled the trigger. Simultaneously I heard that very unpleasant sound which announces the passage of

a bullet through bone and flesh, and which, although I have shot hundreds of animals, I never hear without a momentary pang. Will, who saw the savage as well as I did, exclaimed, "My stars, that poor wretch is done for! I saw the blood gush from his forehead before he fell."

Almost as soon as the echoes had caught up the report of my rifle, a wild yell of vengeance, a blood-curdling and inhuman chorus, rang among the rocks, and reverberated among the cañons, magnifying the sounds, until it appeared as if an army of savages were about to charge in upon us to avenge the death of their comrade.

Hoskins and Rube in the meantime had altered their position, and had come close to the spot where Will and I crouched. We all awaited the next move on the part of the savages with anxiety, but still with a stern determination to fight it out to the last cartridge. I had broken the ice with the death of the first victim of the skirmish; and strange as it may seem, my reluctance to shed blood was so considerably abated that I kept reviewing every jutting rock or ridge in search of another chance of thinning their ranks.

At this moment Rube's Spencer cracked, and immediately Hoskins also fired: neither Will nor I could see with what effect, but both the trappers asserted that two "varmints war rubbed out."

There was a narrow ledge leading by the brink of the barranca; any one wishing to reach the spot where we stood must pass this, and be exposed to our fire. Clearly the savages perceived this, and each was reluctant to be the first. A considerable delay now ensued. We kept close, and although, in the language of Rube, we kept our eyes skinned, we could not detect the whereabouts of a single enemy. Dead silence fell upon the scene of the late turmoil; and it seemed incredible that so many human beings

lay among the silent rocks bent upon mutual destruction. The Apaches, however, during this interval had been plotting how to circumvent us. We soon saw a white cloth, or rather a rag purporting to be white, elevated above the top of a boulder and waved in the air. I put my handkerchief over the muzzle of my rifle and waved it in reply. A savage then came round the rock, holding his flag of truce in front of him, and advanced towards us. Rube, seeing that I meant to go forward to meet him, laid a detainer on me, with the remark, "Shucks! stay whar ye air. Them varmints only wants a chance to make rags of us; let the varmint come in hyar and we'll see what he wants." I thought this advice so excellent that I remained where I was; but I still kept my extemporized flag flying above our parapet. The hundred yards were soon traversed by the Apache, and presently he lightly leaped over the ridge which defended our position and stood before us. He was a truculent-looking savage; every low vice seemed to contend for the monopoly of expression in his face. But his physique was splendid: his chest was full and broad; his arms finely moulded and round; his lower limbs were those of a Grecian statue. He was naked with the exception of a breech-cloth and, of course, his moccasins. His face was hideously besmeared with vermilion and ochre, and his scalp-lock was stiffened with some similar stuff. He stood easily, straight as a lance, and looked us in the face with the haughty glance of a conqueror. From his nose hung a brass ring about two inches in diameter, and from either ear depended three similar rings. His whole body glistened in the early light, having evidently been recently well rubbed with some rancid grease, from which emanated a very foul smell. Several eagles' feathers decorated his stiff, coarse hair, and denoted him to be a chief. I had hardly taken in this *coup d'œil* of the

savage when Hoskins exclaimed, "Cochise, by thunder!" It was in fact that celebrated chief, or rather that notorious wholesale murderer, that stood before us. He extended his hand to Hoskins, saying, "Me Cochise; white man's friend." The trapper took the filthy paw held out to him, and motioning to us all round, said something in a Spanish patois which I did not catch. Cochise nodded to us, but in a dignified kind of way. Hoskins next asked him how it could be, if he were the white man's friend, as he said he was, that he and his braves lurked behind the rocks with their rifles in their hands, and with blood in their eyes for their white brothers. The savage seemed in no wise perplexed by the question, and replied that he did not know we were whites until he saw us. He took us for Utes, with whom his tribe were at war; but now, finding we were his white brothers, he would bury the hatchet if we would handsomely pay him for the loss of his three warriors who had fallen. We would, of course, give him our mules and baggage; and as we were all such good hunters, one rifle would keep us in food until we got back to our own people, and we would give him the other rifles and their ammunition! The extravagance of the demand took us aback, and he must have seen by our faces that we would not accede to this modest request, for he immediately added that he would not take all the mules; he would leave us one, pointing to Rube's old macho, whose grizzled hide and woebegone appearance made his exception an act of generous self-denial on the part of the savage.

While this controversy was going on, Will, happening to look in the direction of the lurking Apaches, perceived to his great alarm that, profiting by our colloquy with the chief, they had slipped on from rock to rock, and one was at that moment passing by the ledge before alluded to as the key of our position. Cochise was instantly told to order

him back, but he affected not to understand; and seeing that treachery was meditated, we broke up the conference, and gave the chief to understand that he must take himself off. This he did, but calmly; nor did he once look round, although he knew that four rifles were ready at a moment's notice to resume hostilities. Scarcely had Cochise gained the shelter of his rocks than a savage war-whoop again pealed forth from twenty throats, and two savages leaped from their ambush to pass the ledge. Will, who was thirsting for an opportunity of distinguishing himself, not having yet fired a shot, struck through the heart the foremost Apache, who had actually got upon the narrow track; and at the crack of the rifle the unfortunate savage leaped from the ground and fell over the dizzy verge! In the silence that followed we heard the heavy and distant thud made by the fall of the body upon the rocks far beneath. Rube's rifle stretched the second savage lifeless before he could again gain the security of his ambush. Bullets hissed harmlessly over our heads or cracked upon the rocks; but owing to the protection afforded by our position none of us were even grazed. Several bullets passed through the embrasure at which Will and I were stationed; but although startled by their vicious hiss, we kept our places and fired whenever we had a chance. There was one savage whose bullets were better directed than any others, and they so often came through our look-out aperture that we had no difficulty in tracing them to a large rock which rose close to the barranca, the under edge of which had been weather-worn at one side, so as to form a first-rate rifle-pit. Lying on the ground behind this boulder, the savage marksman was able to view our position through this space, and it was dangerous to move lest some portion of our bodies should be exposed to his fire. Owing to the fact that we were at a slightly higher eleva-

tion than this savage, we could not see him; but we could see the barrel of his rifle poked out whenever he was about to fire. We determined to try the effect of a ricochet shot: by striking the smooth rock underneath the overhanging verge of the boulder, we hoped our bullets would pass inward and strike the Apache as he lay with his face to the inner side of the aperture. Waiting our opportunity, we soon saw the barrel of his weapon thrust out, and at that instant we pulled trigger. The effect was evident: the savage's rifle fell and lay motionless on the ground, nor were we again annoyed from this quarter. After this event the fight languished, and by eight o'clock had entirely ceased. The Apaches perceived that they were no match for us, and took themselves away, greatly to our relief. They also carried off along with them the bodies of their slain comrades, so that we were unable to ascertain with accuracy how many had fallen; but we felt pretty sure they had lost at least six of their number. Looking over the brink of the barranca, we saw, far below, the remains of the savage whom Will had killed. His body had burst asunder with the tremendous fall, and presented a sickening spectacle. Several vultures were already flapping about it, and a coyote or two were contending with them for the loathsome morsels that lay scattered around. We were devoutly thankful to have come so well out of this affair. The strength of our position was our safeguard, for there can be little doubt that if we had been attacked at our camp in the cañada we should all have perished.

Although the Apaches had retired, we had no means of knowing whether they had not done so in order to entrap us into leaving the security of our natural fortress. There were many places where they could easily ambush us, and with this fear before our eyes we led our mules over the rocks, ready at a moment to secure them and to take shelter

among the clefts and ridges. But no enemy appeared. We perceived traces of the skirmish plentifully scattered about: blood was spattered freely over the rocks, and a few weapons lay here and there on the ground. I took particular notice of the huge boulder from behind which, the reader will remember, a well-posted savage had annoyed Will and me by his accurate shooting. A pool of blood marked the spot, testifying to the effect of our shots.

We did not breathe freely again until we had reached the cañada, and once in this we pushed on as fast as our mules could carry us. All that day we journeyed on, nor did we halt until the sinking sun warned us to camp for the night. It may be supposed that on this occasion we took ample care that the light of our fire should not be seen from any point at a distance; and although we were very anxious, lest our trail might be found and followed up by marauding parties of Apaches, we passed a quiet night.

Our journey back to the Rio Grande was almost without incident: we shot a few antelopes and two cinnamon bears, and on one occasion only did we again encounter the Apaches. We were fortunate in falling in with a strong party of the Third U.S. Cavalry; and, of course, with them we were safe from molestation. We had, however, to keep a sharp look-out at night, to prevent our animals from being stampeded. The Redskins made several attempts; but our vigilance rendered them abortive. A sentry was wounded one night while on guard; and the savage who fired at him was shot, while running off in the darkness, by Hoskins, who happened to come upon him just in the nick of time. In due time we reached the Rio Grande, and Will and I enjoyed the *dolce far niente* of lounging about the gardens of Albuquerque, eating grapes and spinning yarns of our adventures to such curious neighbours as questioned us.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW RESOLVES—SOUTHWARD HO!—EMBARK FOR BELIZE—OUR SKIPPER—OUR "COMPAGNONS DE VOYAGE"—EXTRAORDINARY CONDUCT—PRACTICAL JOKES—BELIZE—VARIOUS RACES—AMALGAMATION—START FOR YSABAL—REGIMENT ON PARADE—A STREET ROW—START FROM YSABAL—PURSUED—FEARFUL TRAIL—MUD—MICO MOUNTAIN—EXQUISITE SCENERY—WILL'S MISHAP—"EL CAMINO REAL"—BEAUTIFUL PALM GROVE—JAGUAR HUNT—THE MOTAGUA—JAGUAR AND PYTHON.

WHILE lying on the bank of the Grande one day, pipe in mouth, and dreamily viewing the splendid prospect that lay before me bathed in gorgeous sunset hues, Will, who was similarly occupied, said suddenly, as if struck by a happy thought: "I say, old fellow, we've had to deny ourselves the pleasure of seeing the pueblos and ruins of Arizona; but what say you to going to see Copan? We have nothing to detain us here now, and we can start down the river and perhaps find a schooner at Brownsville to take us to Belize." This was a good suggestion, and after some further deliberation we finally determined to act upon it. The very next day we left Albuquerque and journeyed down the Grande, admiring the splendid cañons *en route*, and also inspecting the many little out-of-the-way villages and pueblos along the settled portions of the valley. We had some odd adventures on this trip; but space forbids me to detail them here. After some hardships inseparable from travel in thinly-peopled countries, we finally reached Brownsville; and here we were fortunate enough

to find a small coasting vessel, on board which we at once secured cabins, greatly to the disgust of several miners, who wished to monopolize the accommodation for themselves. We had had some experience of how to manage this class of persons, and in a day or two we were in favour with the rough fellows, whose hearts were really not so black as might at first be inferred from their language and appearance.

Our skipper was a very queer specimen of humanity. He was rarely sober; but the ingenuity of his oaths seemed to imply that his senses were not altogether overcome by the liquor which he was constantly imbibing. They were too original and quaint to have been stock phrases shot forth by rote. He was addicted to the practice of shooting pretty freely in any and every direction with a huge navy "Colt," and the deck-house, the spars, bulwarks, etc., bore abundant evidence of this dangerous habit. The miners, however, did not quite relish this pastime, and one day when a glancing bullet shot the pipe from the mouth of one of them, three or four immediately drew their pistols, walked up to the skipper, put the cold barrels to his head, and quietly "backed" him into his deck-house, where they shut him up. A great brawny fellow, who said he was quite an adept at navigating a ship, having been ferryman at Milliken's ferry on the Brazos in Texas for several years, took charge of the vessel, and ordered the hands about as if he were an Admiral on his own quarter-deck! His companions, ten in number, and rough boys in a fight, laughed and backed him up. Never was a mutiny more quiet or more successful. However, it was only a rough joke, and after the captain had been imprisoned for a couple of hours he was again liberated and reinstated in command. Will and I looked on, partly amused and partly apprehensive of some bloody termination

to this horse-play; but the *contretemps* smoothed down again as quickly as it had arisen.

The ringleader in this episode was a big burly rollicking filibuster, whose name I did not hear: his companions spoke of him as "Ike the knifer," and this ill-omened designation deterred us from cultivating his acquaintance. He seemed a roistering, good-natured fellow, as indeed they all did. The party were bound for the Rio San Juan or the more dangerous Frio country, in search of gold, and intended to proceed to Greytown, starting up the river from thence. They recked little of the far-famed Guatusos, who have so rarely been seen by white men, and who have been so fatal to the very few that have had that privilege.

We had, on the whole, an uneventful run from the Del Norte to Belize. We had, however, a stiff gale when off Cape Catoche, which sent me below reduced to a state of abject misery. Will, who was what is called a good sailor, rather enjoyed our tossing than otherwise; and by way of comforting me, he coolly remarked that his pleasure was considerably heightened by the contrast between my wretched plight and his own immunity! Owing to the gale, our leeway was so great that we had a narrow escape of running upon the Chinchorro Bank, off the coast of Yucatan: we grazed several times very slightly, but were *quittés pour la peur.*

Our big-booted gold-hunters laughed at the danger, swore at the storm, and proposed to feed the sharks with the captain. They were like great big children, romping, playing endless practical jokes on each other and on every one else, and behaved altogether in an insane way. There was a little nigger boy about fifteen years old on board who was the chief butt of their wit. One day while we were slipping quietly through the water, within view of the green and level coast-line, they seized on this luckless wight, and having put a life-buoy over

his shoulders attached to a line, they coolly threw him overboard, telling him they wanted to see how sharks took people down! The lad screamed and struggled: he appealed to the captain, who only laughed; and then he besought us to save him. We tried to interfere, but were roughly shouldered aside and told to "keep our heads shut;" we therefore stood passively by, expecting every moment to see the lad taken down. The *gambusinos* sat and stood by the taffrail chaffing him. Pretending to see sharks coming at him, they made bets as to which would have him first. The little nigger, who was towed through the water at about seven knots, was half drowned and half paralyzed with terror, but still managed to "hand" himself along the tow-line towards the ship in a very comical manner. To heighten the joke, the fellows began to shoot at sharks, which they told the boy were just on the "turn" to seize him; and no doubt the sharp hiss of the balls as they passed his head must have added to his fright. To do the rough fellows justice, on a suspicious fin being seen about fifty yards off, they hauled in the lad at once, not much the worse of his ducking. They then insisted on his having some "chain lightning" from each of them; so the wretched boy was obliged to take a treat from them all round "to wash away unkindness," and was soon rolling about the deck in a state of helpless drunkenness. "Ike the knifer" signalized himself by lashing him to the capstan, to keep him from being injured by the roll of the vessel; and he then threw a sail over him to keep off the sun.

This joke kept them in capital "form" for the rest of the day, and long and loud were their shouts of merriment as they recalled the figure cut by their victim, now hauling on the line, now swept through the crest of a wave by the speed of the ship; again emerging half dazed from his submersion, and

looking round with apprehensive eyes to see the sharks that were about to pounce upon him! Merriment is a thirsty affection, and after every joke the whole gang would repair to the steward's pantry, where "straight whisky" was concealed by them in immense quantities. They paid in "dust" and nuggets. One fellow deposited a nugget with the steward which was probably worth £8, and drank against it, "chalking" his score with a piece of charcoal on the title-page of a Bible which somehow had found its way into this very uncongenial atmosphere.

Whatever may be thought of such companions, they certainly kept *ennui* from being a passenger in our ship. What with West India pickles in the tea-pot, "squashes" mashed up in the bunks, live coals surreptitiously introduced into one's boots, the never-ending "squenchers," and the loud bursts of laughter, they managed to keep us alive. I was very glad to shake hands with them, however, and to see them finally disappear with a parting "Be good to yourselves." They were too strong company for either Will or me.

Belize has improved somewhat during late years. But at the time of our visit it might be truly described as one of the last places made. Approaching it from the sea, however, it presented a picturesque appearance; and, like more time-honoured cities in the Old World, it seems to spring at once from the waves. The eye is caught first by a line of white houses stretching by the verge of the water for upwards of a mile; and, at the time of which I speak, this was terminated by Government House at one extremity, and by the barracks at the other. A Gothic spire rising behind Government House suggested ideas of peace and order, while the waving branches of the cocoa-nut trees gave a refreshing air of coolness and repose to the scene. A few vessels were lying scattered here and there in the harbour; and among

these I noticed several rafts of splendid mahogany logs, the export of which forms the staple industry of the country.

We at length got ashore, and were truly glad to stretch our legs again on *terra firma* after our confinement on board the little vessel for so long. We were somewhat dismayed to learn that there was no hotel in the place at which it would be advisable to put up; but after some little search among the various houses, stumbling over the uneven roadway and narrowly escaping a ducking once or twice in the numerous mud puddles which lay like so many traps in the way of the unwary pedestrian, we found a "lady" who would accommodate us. We could not afford to be squeamish, and notwithstanding that our hostess was a greasy-looking mulatto, and our single room nothing better than a large box with holes in the floor, we were glad to secure this asylum for the short time we meant to remain in the town.

The bulk of the population was composed of blacks; but antipathy of race seemed non-existent in Belize—no one was thought the less of for being black or yellow. The negroes were fine specimens of physical strength and symmetry—straight, tall, broad-shouldered, and robust, with healthy-looking skins, which glistened in the sunlight a jetty black. They appeared as a rule to be well fed, well clothed, and prosperous. Their dress consisted chiefly of white cotton shirts and trowsers and straw hats: the women were clad in white frocks with short sleeves and broad red bands, which made a striking contrast with their white dresses.

We were invited to dine with one of the principal merchants in the town, and we were not a little surprised to find that the greater portion of the company was composed of blacks. At first we felt some awkwardness on being presented to these coloured gentlemen with as much formality as if their skins were white. Some of them, how-

ever, conversed as intelligently as average whites; and before we left the house we began to think that after all a colour prejudice was unreasonable. In general, indeed, we found colour a mere matter of taste—white women had black husbands, and white men often took black wives. This seemed an odd state of things; but this amalgamation of races has been in progress here for several generations, and now no one seems to care whether he is black or white. Travellers to Central Africa become so accustomed to the sleek black beauties of that country that on their return to civilized society white ladies seem bloodless and consumptive by comparison.

The roadways about Belize, at the time of which I speak, were in the most dreadful state, and consisted chiefly of an alternation of puddles and quagmires, across which the visitor had to spring. I believe they have been somewhat improved since. The moment we left our house we were ankle deep in mud; the house itself was elevated on posts about two feet over the ground, and the space underneath was a slimy puddle, paddled by ducks to the consistency of a pea-soup!

It may be supposed that we did not unnecessarily protract our stay at Belize. On the day following our arrival we took advantage of a steamer which was about to start for Ysabal, and we were not sorry when at length we began in earnest our journey towards the famous ruins which we had come so far to see. Coming on deck next morning, we found ourselves in the harbour of Ysabal. It was still early; but the sun shone in a cloudless sky, and there was little breeze to temper his beams, which were unpleasantly hot.

The so-called "town" is built upon the rising grounds by the banks of the Golfo Dolce; and beyond it the horizon is bounded by chains of mountains.

There were very few good houses in the place; in fact the

town was mostly composed of sheds of various shades of pretension, thatched with the leaves of the cahoon tree. In the square there were a few frame houses; and here also was situated the church, the architecture of which was as primitive as that of the houses. The climate, however, is so fine that the substantial edifices of more northern regions are here quite unnecessary. Why therefore should they be built? This is the logic of the inhabitants. Northerners as a rule are very intolerant of the *dolce far niente* of tropical climates. Accustomed at home to the furious rush and hurry of the general struggle for existence, they contemn the laziness of the more easy-going inhabitants of countries where Nature has been more lavish of her gifts, and where life is supported by the minimum of exertion. Mr. Franz Keller, in his interesting record of travel in South America, gives an amusing instance of the contentment with the existing state of things shown by a native to whom he had offered hire to act as guide to a surveying expedition. "If you will return to me to-morrow," said the Indian at length, in reply to Mr. Keller's importunities, "when I have sold my fish, I will give you twice as much to let me alone." And truly the savage was right. Why should his copper-hued hide stream with perspiration in order that the survey work (which to him was not more necessary than Greek to a cow) should be facilitated? The inhabitants of tropical climates live comfortably according to their own ideas; Northerners wish to make them live according to Northern ideas: who is right?

On strolling through the village we were very much amused by the ridiculous spectacle presented by a "regiment" on parade. There was no uniformity in the dress, size, or equipments of those soldiers. Some appeared to be about fifteen years of age, others were bronzed, bearded

ruffians of probably fifty years. They stood in an irregular line, big and little disposed accidentally. Some had muskets of the old brown Bess pattern, while others held antiquated firelocks of extravagant length of barrel, to which were fixed rusty bayonets, giving them the appearance of some curious agricultural implements. Many of these warriors were barefoot; most of them exhibited a striking variety in the colour, cut, and quantity of their garments. They certainly were the most motley gang of blackguards either of us had ever seen, and we watched their manœuvres with as much interest as if the parade had been got up expressly in our honour. No one seemed to know where to go, or what to do, at the word of command; and even this was frequently given hesitatingly, and often recalled and another order substituted. At the completion of the parade the men fell into a shambling column and marched past with an inimitable air of martial valour that was altogether irresistible; and despite our attempts at gravity, Will and I broke into a hearty laugh, taking care, however, to look another way, and to appear as if our merriment had some other cause.

We estimated the population of the town at perhaps fifteen hundred or two thousand souls, of every shade of colour, including of course Spaniards. While exploring an outskirt of the town, in which we suddenly found ourselves, we were followed and jeered at by several of the brave warriors whose martial evolutions we had lately been inspecting. At first we took no notice and walked straight on; but finding that the ruffians still followed us, and were joined by a dozen or more congenial spirits, we walked up to a wall that terminated a kind of *cul de sac* into which we had inadvertently wandered, and standing with our backs to it, took out our pipes, filled them, and began to smoke. Will sat down as if quite at ease, and neither he nor I took the least apparent

notice of the gang, who were gibing us at the distance of about twenty yards. When we had smoked for a few minutes, conversing calmly together, we agreed to try what a little bullying would effect. A pebble having been thrown at this moment afforded a good excuse. We suddenly seemed, as it were, to become conscious of the presence of the rabble, and drawing with one hand our knives, we brandished our six-shooters in the other and made a few determined strides towards the jabbering pack of blackguards. The effect was magical. They scattered and fled, sending ducks, cocks and hens flying with cackles and quacks of terror in all directions! Some dived down side alleys, others ran into the houses, while several clambered with monkey-like activity over a wall that bounded the roadway and disappeared. In an instant not a soul was in sight.

We returned to our ship and got out our baggage, and having engaged four mules and their two owners we set out from the "town" on our journey to the ruins. We had hardly left when we heard a great clatter behind, and on looking back we perceived about a dozen men armed with muskets coming after us, at the same time ordering us to halt. We paid not the least attention to this tumult, and were presently overtaken by the officer in command, who ordered us peremptorily to return with him to the town to answer a charge of having been guilty of murderous violence against a number of persons. We laughed at the little man's fussiness, and desiring him to go home if he valued his health, we drew our pistols; and both turning our mules towards him at the same moment, he got alarmed and retreated rapidly on the main body. We wished him adieu, and this was the last we saw of him. He and his queer following evidently thought discretion the better part of valour; and I suppose they returned to the town to report that they had been un-

able to overtake us, so rapid had been our flight upon their appearance.

We soon found ourselves upon a plain which was covered with picturesque copses of trees and shrubs; the soil, however, was soft and marshy, so that the mules sank into it over their fetlocks. We crossed this, and then entered the forest. The shade formed a pleasant contrast with the great heat in the open; but the difficulties of the route increased in proportion as we advanced. During our travels in New Mexico and Arizona we had often to make our way over difficult ground; but the worst place we had yet met with was a joke to the "road" we had now to traverse. The thick tenacious mud seemed to become thicker and more sticky at every step; the path was formed by a chaotic succession of holes of varying depth, separated from each other by ridges of mud and by the gnarled contorted roots of the overarching trees, which frequently were stretched across the track at the height of two or three feet. Over these obstructions our mules had to flounder as best they could, taking their rise at the leap out of the dismal depths of the quagmire, and by their frantic exertions scattering around copious showers of blue adhesive mud. Right or left there was no refuge from this travellers' gehenna: steep slopes, thickly wooded with the inextricably interwoven vegetation of the tropics, confined us to the road, and for a time all our energies were concentrated on keeping our saddles, which was in itself a feat of which we might justly be proud. It often happened that just as a mule plunged wildly over an elevated and dangerous network of roots, the rider's head became entangled amid the festoons of creepers or lianas which were intertwined from tree to tree, and some of these snake-like parasites were furnished with rough or thorny projections, which inflicted painful abrasions and scratches.

I say nothing of the frequent loss of hats, guns, etc.; nor will I mention the exacerbation of temper occasioned by these apparent trifles. Let the reader figure to his mind what I have said; let him add a hothouse atmosphere, cooler, indeed, than the blazing sun, but almost as oppressive; mosquitoes in legions, and each insect doing all he knew to exasperate his victim; the not infrequent halt to replace some article of baggage kicked off by a mule; a thick coating of blue mud plastered over dress, hands, face, saddle, everything;—if he can imagine the situation, aggravated by the not unnatural pig-headedness of two mules that *would* fall and cast their packs into the deepest sloughs they could find, and wait quietly half-smothered until they were lifted and belaboured to their legs again; if he can figure all this, and then multiply it by ten for the difference between imagination and reality, he will begin to have a faint conception of our ride over this portion of the route.

We kept the echoes busy with our shouts and with the loud cracking of our whips, which fell with the report of a pistol upon the flanks of our unfortunate animals. In a short time we descended into the bed of a quick-rushing stream, which glanced and surged and foamed amid rock and boulder, canopied above by the bright green foliage of the trees, through which shot the rays of the sun in many a slanting sheaf, lighting up the tufts of feathery bamboo which waved above the dancing waters. Every branch was fringed with orchids, and many of the trees were draped with deep green veils of graceful moss, which decked them over from top to bottom. Looking down the stream, the forest receded slightly from the banks, and starting forward from its dense bosom I saw the heads of many palms waving their fronds with the least motion of the air. The banks, and even the boulders, were ablaze with flowering shrubs. Here scarlet and

gold was Nature's livery, and these gorgeous hues tinted the landscape, and were borne even through the air by parrots or other birds. There was, however, a great diversity in the colours of these: many were golden-green, some were blue and yellow, others were crimson, while yet others seemed so bedizened as if got up expressly for chromatic effect. Blue-winged jays chattered harshly among the branches. Suddenly a stream of fire seemed to shoot through the trees: that was a macaw in his flaming garb. Everywhere were birds as brilliant as the flowers, and flowers as brilliant as the birds. It was a paradise of colour. Lovely as the scene and its inhabitants were, however, we had something less pleasing to occupy our attention. The passage of the stream was difficult owing to the numerous rocks, or rather large rough stones, scattered about in it. The water rushed over these in foaming swirls that rendered it almost impossible for either ourselves or the mules to steer a safe course. Will's mule stumbled over a stone, made a prodigious effort to keep its legs, sending showers of spray over itself and its rider, and finally pitched head first into a rapid. Will disappeared completely for a moment, but emerged blowing like a grampus, and still holding on by the reins. The ducking, however, was most useful in ridding him of the superfluous dirt contracted during our scramble through the swampy track. However, everything has an end, and we at last got to the other side and exchanged the rushing river for another muddy trail. The trees overhung this so closely as almost to exclude the light, and for about an hour we followed this gloomy path, when we reached the foot of a mountain; and dispirited as we had been by the difficulties of our road up to this point, our hearts almost failed us altogether by the prospect which now confronted us.

The level track here ceased and gave place to a precipitous.

gully, rugged and torrent-worn, encumbered with huge stones, varied by frequent sloughs, and so tortuous and narrow that on either hand we hardly had room to squeeze past the high banks that shut us completely in. In several of the worst places, where a stiff and yet soft clay deposit had been left in deep holes, each of our mules in succession sunk to the shoulders. A halt was then called, and all hands proceeded to extricate the helpless beasts. During this trying operation those animals that had been got through the sloughs sometimes took advantage of their momentary freedom, started off up the defile, and knocked their freshly adjusted packs off against the rocks or projecting banks. They had then to be captured; and this was not an easy task, as the knowing brutes scrambled along all the faster on hearing us trying to overtake them. We had to head them off by climbing out of the gully and getting in advance of them unperceived. Whenever one stuck fast, those behind had to stand still, there being no room to pass; and both Will and I got our legs much bruised and scratched by having them rasped against the banks at nearly every slip or stumble on the part of our animals. Our guides led the van and brought up the rear: he in advance pulled and tugged and searched for the best spots, where choice offered; while he behind lashed and shouted, stormed and cursed, in unison with his fellow in front. We sat in passive misery, clinging to our saddles, accommodating ourselves to the convulsive movements of our animals, now and then bearing against the rocks to steady them, or with acrobatic agility removing a limb from imminent peril of collision with the snags or stones projecting from the sides of the gully. After emerging from this passage we again entered on a track exactly similar to that which I have already described as commencing with the forest, with the addition that the route we had now to travel

was up a very steep ascent. We thought that the mud holes were deeper, wider, and more tenacious of their hold upon us, and that the tree roots were more frequent, more matted and impassable; but we were wearied and disgusted, and perhaps we were wrong. It was, however, a terrible place; and at each lurch of my mule I thought, with a certain amount of amusement, of my pride in performing much less difficult feats of horsemanship while following our local pack of hounds at home.

The day wore on while we were struggling with the difficulties of this fearful place; but as the sun sank towards the horizon and flooded skies and forest with his crimson beams, we emerged upon a small open space or clearing at the summit of the mountain, about a hundred yards in diameter, and used as a camping-ground by the mule trains that traverse this route. Reader, do not imagine that this track through the forest was one in occasional use through a little frequented portion of the country. No such thing; it was the great highway of traffic leading to the city of Guatemala, and over which is carried the great bulk of the merchandise that finds its way into the country!

We took advantage of the clearing to halt for a few minutes to rest ourselves and our wretched mules. These poor brutes presented a woful aspect: they were thoroughly worn out, bedraggled, and plastered with mud all over. Instead of searching for something to eat, they drooped their heads and tails and stood huddled together, presenting the very image of dejection. In half an hour we again took the trail, and after two hours struck a wild mountain stream plunging madly along over its rocky bed, beneath the gloomy shade of tall trees. This was the Arroyo del Muerto, or Deadman's Stream. Crossing it we continued our way along a slope of the mountain, and after a little came

out upon a ridge free from timber, from which we enjoyed a glorious prospect of the setting sun, tinging a vast and rich savanna with his fiery light. Below this point we at length gained a table-land from which we descended to the plain at its foot. As night was approaching (the sun having now almost touched the horizon) we reached a wood of palms which threw a dense shade across the path. Their high arches extended above us, and in the mystic light which prevailed beneath their branches we could easily have fancied ourselves passing through the aisles of vast and lofty cathedrals, so like these creations of human art were their umbrageous arches. The trunks formed treble and quadruple colonnades; and upon the greensward underneath, the expiring beams of the sinking sun painted the shadows of the massive pillars of this sylvan temple. Amid these we camped, and never did tired wayfarers hail a halt with more pleasure. We had been ten hours in the saddle and had only advanced twelve miles. This will give a more vivid idea of the difficulties we had encountered than any words.

We were almost too fatigued to eat, and although we had not tasted a mouthful of food since starting in the morning, we made but a poor attack upon our provisions. Fortunately the mule that had carried them had escaped the many dangers which beset us by flood and forest, and our stock of coffee, tins of preserved meat, biscuits, etc., were uninjured, as was also our ammunition.

As we lay at our camp among the palms we could discern the massive bulk of the forest-covered Mico mountain, which we had crossed with such toil and suffering, looming through the gathering twilight; and as we beheld it we devoutly prayed that we might be delivered from it in the future. It was an experience never to be forgotten even by us who had scaled the cañons of New Mexico and Arizona,

APPROACH TO THE TRAIL OVER MICO MOUNTAIN.

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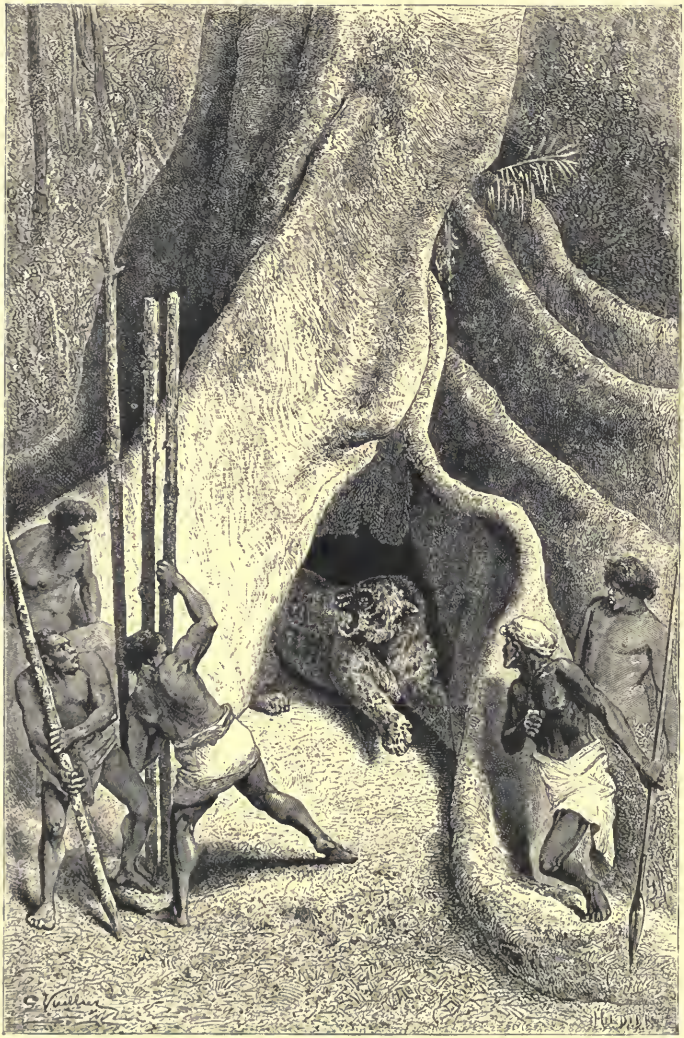
and had travelled by many a rough and dangerous trail. We turned in at once; and I, at least, slept a dreamless sleep, which was broken only by the call of our guides at sunrise.

Our first care was breakfast; and as the steaming and fragrant cup went round, the sun rose and lighted the scene. Our bivouac was regretfully deserted, and taking a lingering look of admiration at the beautiful colonnade of palms that had sheltered us, we spurred our mules and soon left the spot behind. The way we were conducted by our guides led us along the ridge of a mountain, and on either hand we looked down into fertile wooded valleys, while far away were green hills, dotted over with detached trees, smiling in the bright early sunshine. Nowhere, however, could we see any trace of inhabitants; but we did not consider this a drawback. It was not long, however, before we heard sounds of chopping wood; and causing our guides to lead us towards it, we presently came upon a singular scene. An enormous tree, closely resembling the *higueira*, or wild fig of tropical America, rose before us, its vast trunk buttressed by roots which rose high above the ground, and in front of this several natives were busily occupied in planting stakes so as to form an enclosure round a cavernous opening that yawned under the centre of the great stem. A glance sufficed to show us their object. The hole was the haunt of a jaguar, the fierce *tigre* of Spanish America, and the hunters perceiving from the "sign" that he was at that moment within, they were about to trap him.

They moved with caution and made as little noise as possible, digging the holes for the stakes with their *machetes* and scooping out the loosened earth with their hands. The stakes they cut at a little distance, so as not to alarm the jaguar by any unnecessary noise at the entrance of his lair. We had arrived in the nick of time for a little excitement;

and leaving our mules at a safe distance in charge of the guides, my friend and I looked to our rifles and took up our position in front of the tree on a small mound or sloping bank. The hunters begged us not to fire except as a last resource, as their intention was to capture the animal alive if possible, with the view of selling him to a wild beast collector, who was in search of specimens for a zoological society in Europe. We were intensely interested by the proceedings, as each moment we expected to see the fierce brute charge out among his enemies and deal death among them. Meanwhile the hunters stealthily proceeded with their work: three stakes had been planted in front and a little at one side of the cave; one of the men stood behind a huge root, spear in hand, ready to stab the beast if he should attempt to escape, which Will and I hoped devoutly he would do. We had hardly exchanged a remark to this effect when we heard a loud snarling roar proceeding from the lair, and almost at the same moment the jaguar appeared at the entrance, his mouth open, displaying his shining teeth, while in the darkness of his retreat his eyes flamed like live coals. We, who stood some thirty yards distant, had a good view of him as he shot out into the light. The Indians, with one accord, struck work and vanished round the huge tree trunk. He with the spear seemed to forget his office, and stood apparently transfixed himself, instead of transfixing the jaguar. In an instant the furious beast leaped over the slight obstruction caused by an elevated root, and with one blow in passing knocked the man backwards; and seemingly satisfied with this feat, he made for the woods at a graceful canter. This occurrence took place so suddenly, and, as it were, so unexpectedly, although we had quite looked for it, that neither Will nor I could get our rifles to bear until the animal was some fifty yards away. Both reports seemed



TRAPPING A JAGUAR.

one, and although the jaguar was evidently hit hard, he did not fall. When the balls hit him he hoisted his tail and hind legs in the air, and roared, but held on at scarcely abated speed. Thanks to our repeaters, however, we got two more bullets into him; and now clearly feeling sick, he "treed." This was a fatal step. We quietly approached the tree, and about thirty feet above the ground, stretched along a giant branch, we perceived him glowering savagely at us. Will threw up his Winchester, and at the crack the animal gave a convulsive leap, and, turning over in the air, fell with a resounding thump upon the ground. He was quite dead. Our first shots had entered a little in front of the hip, and had raked him obliquely, coming out on the left side near the shoulder. The last shot struck him exactly between the eyes and escaped at the back of his head. He was a young male in splendid condition and most handsomely spotted. We claimed the hide; but finally agreed to buy it from the Indians, as they were as accessory to the death of the beast as we were.

We had some difficulty in getting either of our mules to carry the skin for us—the sight and smell were enough for them; but by accustoming them to see it carried by one of the guides, they soon lost their dread of it. The man who was knocked down escaped with a contused shoulder and some severe scratches which bled very freely for some time.

After this adventure we continued our journey, and about three o'clock in the afternoon we saw below us in a valley, glittering and flashing in the sun, the Motagua river, which is one of the largest in Central America. In an hour we stood upon the bank at a spot exactly opposite Encuentros, and beheld ourselves surrounded upon all sides by lofty mountains, outlined against the deep blue sky, their sides covered with forests or exhibiting green slopes of pasture,

and their base hidden among a luxuriant and entangled wilderness of vegetation, nourished by a fertile soil and a tropical sun. It was a beautiful scene; and through it, with strong, impetuous current, rolled the noble stream, on the banks of which we were halted.

We hallooed for a ferryman for some time in vain. We could see five or six canoes floating by the opposite bank; but the houses seemed deserted. Will fired a few shots, and these brought several Indians running to their doors to learn the cause of the commotion. Our guides shouted for some one to come over for us; and after a little delay a canoe was unmoored, and a man got in and shoved out into the stream. In a moment the powerful current carried him downwards; but the native was evidently an adept at the use of his paddle. He soon brought his craft alongside, and took on board our baggage, saddles, and other impedimenta, as well as ourselves. We led the mules into the water, and caused them to swim after us by attaching ropes to their halters; but it was no easy task to induce them to face the strongly rushing river. However, by this time we were becoming inured to difficulties and annoyances of all kinds, and were therefore not easily ruffled by any circumstance. We landed safely close to the village, and immediately set to work to render ourselves as respectable as was possible in our position, by having a good bath and removing as much dirt from our clothes as we could.

Our plight was far from enviable; we were covered from head to foot with mud, which had been plentifully spattered over us by our animals, as also by our having to dismount and struggle thigh-deep through quagmires, to assist the pack-mules as often as they fell. We spent an hour in cleaning ourselves, very much to the interest of the inhabitants of Encuentros, who crowded about us to gratify their

curiosity. We had no fear of alligators, as the river was very rapid. These reptiles as a rule haunt sluggish bayous and lakes, and are rarely, if ever, found in quick-running water. To say that we relished our bathe is to say nothing. We had not changed our clothes for thirty-four hours, and during much of that interval we had been bathed in perspiration. It was therefore an inexpressible relief to throw off our filthy garments and to plunge head first into the deep and crystal river. The thought of having to resume our soiled habiliments was disagreeable; but by wringing them several times in the water, much of the dirt was removed, and we set them up to dry while we enjoyed our ablutions to our hearts' content. The water was of a delightful temperature, so that we prolonged our bathe until our clothes were dry enough to put on. We felt quite refreshed, and proceeded to the village in quest of quarters for the night, as we did not mean to proceed beyond Encuentros until the next morning.

Evening was drawing on apace as we left the river, and the hues of the sunset sky bathed the amphitheatre of mountains in a flood of carmine light. The air was still, the graceful foliage of the trees depended motionless towards the earth, and the silence of the afternoon was broken only by the majestic river, which swept past the banks with a rushing sound, and by the occasional scream of a parrot, of which birds there were several flocks in sight. The Motagua on our side was deep in the shadows of the overhanging trees; but at some distance a long line of light fell upon its ample bosom from the setting sun and transformed it to a sheet of flame. It was an exquisite evening, and the scene seemed to be the abode of perpetual peace.

We lodged with a half-naked mulatto, *Don* Ignacio de Paez, who presently introduced us to his wife, who was as

greasy and as yellow and as lightly clad as her liege lord. However, far be it from me to criticise their appearance, and their apparel, or rather their want of it. They were hospitable: they killed the fatted fowl and baked the leathery tortilla in our honour; and when we retired to rest, it was upon the bullock-hide trestle of our host and hostess that we sought repose. It is true we paid for this accommodation; but then no one is so unreasonable as to expect favours *gratis* in Spanish America. We were therefore none the less under an obligation. Our mules stood outside, and Don Ignacio, for a further consideration, provided them with some coarse hay. The guides slung their hammocks at the side of the house.

Sleep should not be lightly looked for by a traveller in Central America. Our bed contained other occupants than myself and my friend, and these resented our intrusion, or perhaps welcomed us in a manner more pleasing to themselves than to us. In short they were legion, and if unanimity had prevailed among them they could easily have pulled us out of bed. What with the heat, the unpleasant odours of the apartment, and the mosquitoes, we found sleep out of the question. We tossed and grumbled for a few hours, and finally, being unable to stand it any longer, I got up and went out. The freshness of the air was delightful by contrast with the closeness of the hut, and I inhaled it with rapture. The moon sailed high over the forest-covered mountains and threw her silvery radiance upon the broad and smooth surface of the swift Motagua; the gloom of the trees was illumined by myriads of cocuyos or fire-flies, which glanced like tiny lanterns amid the foliage. A deep silence rested upon the dreamy landscape, broken, or rather made more marked, by the drowsy rush of the river and the occasional note of some bird. I sat on a bench beside the door

and enjoyed the beauty of the night. In a short time I began to feel sleepy, and lying at length upon the bench, I obtained the rest which the great fatigues of the previous day rendered deep and refreshing. Towards morning, however, the air grew chill and I awoke. The moon was just sinking behind the mountains. She seemed to rest on the summit of a peak, but presently slowly passed down beyond it, and against her clear disc its outlines were distinctly drawn. I took my rifle and walked down to the river. The mighty flood passed me in its impetuous course, great patches of foam flecking its surface. Now and then a tree was carried rapidly by, having doubtless been undermined by the waters.

Knowing that it would be impossible to face the offensive interior of the hut again after the fresh air I had been inhaling, I continued my walk by the river bank, although the darkness which precedes the dawn rendered objects very indistinct. There was a charm in wandering thus in this wild spot, and I therefore walked on and on, until the gradual brightening of the sky announced the approach of sunrise. I rambled very slowly, and sometimes I sat down to pass the time, so that when I turned in order to retrace my steps I had probably wandered more than two miles from the village. Dawn rapidly overspread the sky, and already birds were awake and astir; congos howled among the woods in their dismal fashion, and many kinds of waders and other aquatic birds flitted by the margins of the water. As soon as the sun rose I was about to turn aside from the river, when I perceived Will coming towards me. He, too, had been forced to the open air; and together we went a little way into the woods in the hope of getting a shot at some animal. Our guides had told us that deer were plentiful, and also an animal which they called a "bush-cow," but

what that could be neither Will nor I could determine. From their description, however, it seemed worth cultivating, and we had some hope of falling in with it in a forest glade or by the margin of some sluggish stream. We had not gone far when our attention was arrested by an extraordinary noise which proceeded from the thick woods in front. I had heard the cries of most of the wild animals of America; but none of them resembled this. It varied also: sometimes it seemed to be produced by a creature in terrible agony; again, and instantly, it sounded like the gasping sobs of some animal being strangled; and then again changed to a strange snarling roar, half stifled in its utterance. We also could hear a great commotion among the underwood, as if a terrible contest were going on between some powerful creatures.

We were very much interested to find out the cause of this turmoil, and cocking our rifles we pushed quietly and quickly towards the spot. A single glance explained the mystery: before us was being enacted a wild drama, a battle for life or death between an immense python and a jaguar!

We stood fixed to the spot with horror and astonishment. The spectacle was an awful one: devilish hate and fierce strength, teeth, claws, and the tortuous folds of the muscular reptile, combined to render the strife a fearful one. The boa had thrown two massive coils round the throat and chest and between the fore legs of his enemy, and had fixed his open jaws over the right temple. The jaguar, on the other hand, struggled with the utmost desperation, and rolled over the ground, uttering the smothered roars which had brought us to the spot, and sometimes rearing on his hind legs, and tearing with his powerful claws in the endeavour to rid himself of his terrible foe. But his efforts were futile. The folds of the great snake, instead of becoming relaxed, were

FIGHT BETWEEN A PYTHON AND A JAGUAR.

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slowly and surely drawn tighter and tighter, the gasping sobs of the jaguar became more frequent and more laboured, and presently, with a despairing and half-stifled roar, he ceased to struggle, and lay still. He was dead. At this point the snake unwound his coils, and for an instant seemed to inspect his victim. He then prepared to devour the carcass. But neither Will nor I could allow the loathsome creature to complete his triumph. We advanced a step or two to get a better aim, when the huge reptile heard us, and raised his head high above the grass and weeds, his baleful eyes fixed upon us with a stare that had something absolutely fiendish in its malignant intensity. A ball from Will's rifle crashed through his skull, and we had immediately to stand clear, so tremendous were the dying struggles of the monster. Bushes, grass, and even small trees, were levelled with the earth, and through a confused mass of torn and tossed leaves and branches we could see the glistening blood-stained coils writhing in furious contortions. His struggles soon quieted, however; and although the brute was sensitive to a touch for some time after, he was now practically dead. The bullet had shattered his skull; and notwithstanding this, so great is the vitality of these reptiles, he lived for an hour afterwards!

We next inspected the jaguar. On pulling him over on his back we at once perceived that nearly every bone in his body was broken. The python had not escaped scathless either, as many deep scratches testified. He must have seized the jaguar suddenly and unexpectedly. If the latter had been able to get the neck of the snake into his mouth, the contest would have been soon decided. We removed the handsome spotted hide, which was quite uninjured, and leaving the great boa lying in the weeds in a pool of blood, we returned to Encuentros to breakfast.

Don Ignacio had just arisen as we reached the door, and was much surprised at seeing us return with the hide of a *tigre* as a trophy. We set him to work preparing our meal; and although the chicken was not tender, and the tortillas were tough, we ate a hearty breakfast, and washed down the solids with plenty of strong coffee.

CHAPTER X.

BEAUTIFUL SCENES—TROPICAL TREES—COCHINEAL PLANTATION—GORGEOUS SUNSET SCENE—SAN PABLO—DON ITURBIDE—SUDDEN RAIN-STORM—DON ITURBIDE'S ESCAPE—CHIQUIMULA—GREAT CHURCH—WILD SCENES—HUGE PYTHON—WILL'S ESCAPE—DEATH OF THE PYTHON—VIEW FROM SUMMIT OF THE SIERRA—TERRIBLE DELUGE—COMOTAN—EVIDENCES OF MISGOVERNMENT—CHANTICLEER—HIS SAD FATE—THE COPAN RIVER—HACIENDA—A HOSPITABLE SEÑORA.

We left Encuentros at seven o'clock, and for about an hour we followed the course of the Motagua, and then began to ascend the steep slopes that lead back from the river to a mountain ridge of considerable elevation. From this point the eye takes in a vast expanse of country, comprising all the elements of picturesque scenery—green and fertile plains, gorgeous forests, and ranges of hills, exhibiting every variety of outline, gray and green hued with rock and wood, and in the far distance softened in purple haze. The ridge was narrow, and a bad route; but we had no choice, and occupied ourselves in alternately admiring the prospect and in avoiding the many slippery rocks and other obstacles that were thickly strewn along the path.

For several miles we traversed this mountain ridge, and then, much to our relief, struck into a dense forest of shady trees. In front of the woods a magnificent tree excited our admiration. It was a ceiba or silk-cotton tree; and although it was of vast proportions, it was not for itself we admired it, but because it was inwreathed in scarlet vines, which

completely covered it with their million flaming blossoms. Other trees were hung over with beautiful bignonias, whose trumpet-shaped corollas were haunted by hundreds of gaudily-painted humming-birds, which flashed in the sunlight as they shot past with the rapidity of light. Over the crest of the forest rose the graceful crowns of the palma real, which is one of the tallest as well as most beautiful of its kind. Many of these were fully one hundred feet in height, and we remarked that they were, as usual, attended by the *caña de la India*, or Indian cane, which is almost invariably found growing close to these trees. Fruit-laden corozos also attracted our attention, their immense grape-like clusters seeming more numerous than the leaves.

The nuts of this tree are about the size of a walnut, and are covered exteriorly by a pulpy substance which it is difficult to detach from the shell. The fruit hangs down beneath the umbel of the fronds, and gives an appearance of great richness to the tree, the smooth glossy trunk of which almost resembles an iron pillar, so free from any roughness or inequality is it. There were here specimens of almost every tree in Central America. As we rode along I noticed abanicos, or fan-palms, or, as they are sometimes called, talipot trees, growing abundantly, their vast leaves hanging limp and motionless in the sultry air; the thorny trunked pirijao palms, lifting high their plumed heads, and exhibiting their enormous racemes of golden-hued fruit; the wax-palm, famed for its resinous gum; the cocoa, upon which hangs the well-known *pan de vida*. The thickets were filled with bamboo briers and scores of plants of which I did not know the names; and through the intertwined undergrowth rose the trunks of perhaps the most beautiful of all tropical forms —the graceful and full-plumed tree-ferns, whose immense fronds hung downwards and filled the middle space between

the higher foliage of the great trees above and the underwood below. On all sides we beheld the beautiful blossoms of the scarlet vine draping the branches, tropical tree-flowers, and, as I have stated, the trumpet-shaped corollas of the bignonia. The woods were lighted up with colours as brilliant as were ever mixed on the palette of a painter, and their hues were intensified by the cloudless rays of the sun. From tree to tree in this gorgeous paradise flashed vividly-coloured birds;—tanagers of several species; resplendent trogons, of which there were many varieties; flocks of lories, harshly chattering as they flew off at our approach. Crested curassows hid behind the foliage as we passed; and several times we caught sight of that beautiful bird, the turkey of Honduras.

The wild turkey of North America was by many supposed to be distributed throughout the central regions of the continent; but this was an error which probably arose from the resemblance—a somewhat slight one,—between the great bird of the north and the painted beauty of the south. The latter is a splendid game-bird, and the flavour of his flesh recommends itself as much to the palate as his gorgeous plumage does to the eye. In colour it is a dark mottled green shot with a metallic lustre, which blazes in the sunlight as the proud bird catches the rays upon his burnished coat. I could devote a volume to the lovely beings which we constantly met as we advanced; but I can only afford space for a few of the most striking forms.

After passing through this luxuriant wilderness, we were very much astonished to come suddenly upon a closed gate, which was stretched across the road exactly like a toll-bar! We had supposed the neighbourhood to be quite uninhabited, but here was very convincing proof to the reverse. However, we saw no one, and having opened the gate, which by the way was of solid mahogany, as were its massive posts,

we continued our journey through a thick wood, which afforded us shelter from the burning sun. We presently came upon a bright dashing stream embowered in the rich entangled vegetation of the tropics, the brilliant green of which, aided by the pleasant sparkle and gurgle of the stream, seemed to mitigate the sense of suffocation which we endured from the heat. Beyond this charming little river, the vista of which, up and down as we crossed, will long remain impressed on my memory, we came upon a lane enclosed between high hedges, through which shot up tall trees that closed in overhead; and on following this for a short distance we perceived that we were passing through the estate of a rich native who raised cochineal. We did not halt, however, but continued across a bare plain, where we were almost scorched to death by the extraordinary heat of the sun. This plain was sheltered from the winds, and its surface refracted the rays, and thus added to the heat. About three o'clock we entered Gualan, where a thermometer which had somehow penetrated to that out-of-the-way place registered 100° in the shade of the deeply-thatched veranda of the house at which we put up.

Our first act was to indulge in the luxury of a bath; our next to put on clean clothes. This was one of the most real pleasures I have ever experienced. We had been drenched with perspiration, covered with dust and dirt, and had in addition got wet through in crossing rivers, and our clothes had dried and stiffened upon us. To get them off, to wash, and put on clean linen, was a pleasure to remember.

Gualan stands upon a table of breccia rock just at the point where two majestic rivers commingle their waters, and is surrounded by a chain of mountains. The population consists chiefly of Mestizoes, and probably numbers ten or twelve thousand. The houses as a rule are of one story,

and have piazzas in front. The principal street terminates in the plaza or square, and here is a large church with a Gothic door, in front of which, at fifteen yards' distance, stands a cross about twenty feet in height. We observed that by the banks of the Motagua there was a kind of boat-building yard, and several boats, one of which measured upwards of fifty feet in length and about eight feet beam, were being constructed. The river here is not deep. We saw men and women fording it, the parting gleams of the setting sun tinging the water, which rippled against their legs in wavelets of fire. The woods caught the gorgeous flush of sky and water, and I then declared that I never would again criticise a landscape painting as too highly coloured. The hues of this sunset scene were indescribably vivid. It seemed as if the sun shone upon the earth through the medium of some vast and richly-hued window in the heavens. We wandered about for some time, pleased with the primitive simplicity of the place and the people, and as dusk approached we returned to our house.

We enjoyed a refreshing night's rest. Our beds were clean, and were furnished with mosquito-netting. The windows were spacious, and through them a gentle air entered, bringing coolness and perfume. We therefore had no difficulty in sleeping, and, as I have said, we enjoyed a deep and reinvigorating repose.

The next morning we felt none the worse of our fatigues, and started in the best spirits. We kept the Motagua river on our right hand, and beyond it rose the picturesque slopes and cliffs of the Vera Paz mountains, which reach an elevation of from six to eight thousand feet. After riding for about an hour, the path began to ascend, and presently thereafter we found ourselves in the midst of one of those gardens of Nature which she now and then plants, seemingly

to show man what can be done in this fertile land with the materials which lie about on every side, and which only require to be brought together. About us on all sides were thickets and beds of flowers of every hue and of every species; bushes, blossoming, as it were, at every pore, surrounded us, and among them rose the beautiful palmetto. From the rocks, and among the ravines in every nook and cranny, grew plants and shrubs blazing with colour. High trees overhung with flowering vines seemed themselves one vast bouquet, so entirely did the gorgeous blossoms monopolize every square inch—wherever there was room there was a flaming flower. For about three hours we passed from one scene of beauty to another; everywhere there was variety and everything was beautiful.

We at length descended to the river, and at this spot it ran with great swiftness, occasionally breaking into foam against huge boulders that studded its bed. The path followed the river, and after continuing by the banks for some distance, it again rose to a height of several thousand feet. We reached San Pablo early in the afternoon. This little town is built upon a lofty plateau having the river at its foot, and in the distance the view is intercepted by the summits of the Vera Paz mountains. As we entered the village we passed the church, and proceeding a little further we dismounted, and desiring our guides to look after the mules, we sought out the alcalde, from whom we procured fresh guides to take us on to Zacapa. From the road near the church we beheld an enchanting prospect of mountain and forest, the former being streaked with the white lines of two noble cascades which shot down its sides, disappearing among the wooded slopes. Starting afresh we soon gained a view of the extensive plain of Zacapa, over which rose the ridges of a belt of mountains, at whose feet is situated the

town. This plain is fertile and well cultivated. Having crossed it, we forded a stream, and scrambling up a rugged bank we found ourselves at Zacapa. The cultivated appearance of the plain surprised us; but we were still more astonished by the town, which was by far the best we had yet seen in the country. The streets were well laid out and regular; the houses were well built, and were covered with smooth plaster and whitewashed. Large balconied windows and piazzas formed a feature in each house. The church was a massive structure, two hundred and fifty feet long, and its walls were ten feet in thickness. The façade was in the Moorish style, and was thickly covered with mauresques. The shape was that of a Latin cross, of which one end was roofless. The other seemed to be the residence of some poor villager. Bells were ringing as we approached, and we observed people issuing from their houses and proceeding to the church for vespers.

We had been very kindly given letters of introduction by the cura of Gualan to a gentleman in Zacapa, Don Iturbide de Oviedo, and to his house we directed ourselves.

We were not sorry to perceive that the house was one of the best in the town; and having entered we were shown into a handsome sala, in the furniture and general arrangement of which much taste had been expended. It was in truth a pleasant surprise to find such good quarters; and our host, who made his appearance in a few moments, by his warm welcome made us feel quite at ease. Don Iturbide's mansion had a street frontage of one hundred and twenty feet, and was of corresponding depth, enclosing in the centre a courtyard filled with beautiful plants, statues, and fountains. Round this court ran balconies supported by pillars of polished mahogany, ornamented with Corinthian capitals.

The sala was lighted by six large windows reaching from

the ceiling to the floor, and was probably about sixty feet in length. Hanging baskets containing beautiful flowers, and gilt cages in which were gaudily-plumaged birds, hung in the windows; and distributed about the room were many curious objects—specimens of pottery from Copan, ancient weapons, and other archæological treasures. There were also book-cases filled with handsomely-bound volumes, among which was a complete set in Spanish of the Waverley novels. To see these delightful works in so distant a place was like an unexpected meeting with old friends. Time and space seemed annihilated, and while turning over the pages of "Woodstock" I forgot my situation, and again imagined myself beneath a holly-covered bank by the brink of a tumbling cascade where I have passed many a happy hour with my favourite author.

We passed a pleasant evening under the hospitable roof of Don Iturbide. He had married a charming creole of New Orleans, where he had met her a few months before the time of our visit. Although devotedly attached to her husband, she seemed to regret the beautiful city she had left, as well as her friends. However, she had as yet hardly had time to make new friendships, and in a year afterwards when I next saw her she seemed very bright and happy.

The next morning at seven o'clock we left Zacapa, and were accompanied for a few miles by Don Iturbide, who, finding that his pressing offers of hospitality could not induce us to prolong our stay, rode with us for an hour or two to see us fairly off. The Don was a fine sample of a descendant of the *conquistadores*—handsome, dashing, gallant, and brave. He was likewise well educated, and a most agreeable companion. He was an ardent hunter, and the walls of his spacious mansion were adorned with many a trophy of his skill.

After fording the Motagua, which at the spot was broad, rapid, and deep enough to reach the shoulders of our mules, my companion, in the endeavour to keep his legs dry, threw them over the withers of his mule, holding on to the saddle with might and main as the animal stumbled over the uneven bed. When about half way over, and while in the deepest part of the channel, the mule gave a tremendous lurch, having slipped on a stone at the bottom. In an instant her rider disappeared. He seemed rather to vanish by some magical means than simply to fall from the back of a stumbling mule. In a moment, however, his head emerged from the rapid current, and being a powerful swimmer, he struck out obliquely for the bank, which he reached almost at the same moment as his mule. Will was not cast down by this accident. To show how little he regarded it, he skipped and bleated along the bank, shaking showers of water from his clothes, and altogether presented so ludicrous a spectacle that I laughed until the tears came into my eyes. He remounted, dripping as he was, and we continued our journey over the beautiful plain of Zacapa, which was all cultivated and waved with corn-fields. Cochineal was likewise produced by the natives, and they derive a considerable profit from this industry. The fields were well fenced by hedges of cactus, mixed with some thick-growing shrubs, and altogether the district presented an appearance of progress and comfort very unusual in the country.

After leaving the plain we again became entangled among rocks, thickets, and hills; fertility disappeared, and the general aspect of the scenery was sterile and wild. The path became broken and difficult, and while struggling up the steep ascent, the foremost mule detaching stones from their loose bed, which rolled down and were avoided by the others as best they could, we were overtaken by one of the sudden

deluges for which the mountains of this country are celebrated. I had seen in Ireland rain against which nothing seemed to afford protection; but it could not be compared with the water-spouts of Central America. The atmosphere seemed transformed into a driving, drifting, more or less continuous sheet of solid water. In one instant I was wet to the skin. The streams of wet collected by my clothes drained from my trowser legs as if they had been six-inch pipes. Our mules turned tail to the storm, and underneath a large tree we awaited its passing. Fortunately there was little wind—an unusual circumstance. Will, who had been previously as wet as he could be, laughed at my dejected appearance, and declared that he did not mind it in the least.

As soon as the rain ceased, Don Iturbide bade us farewell and returned to Zacapa, while we advanced up the mountain. We feared that the Motagua would be swollen by the heavy rain before Don Iturbide could reach it; and we afterwards learned that we were right in that expectation. Our host had a narrow escape from being drowned while swimming his horse, a powerful black stallion, across the broad and rapid river. A large tree which was being swept down by the flood struck against the horse and rolled him over in the water. His rider was of course thrown into the current, and only by great exertion managed to haul himself upon the tree, which floated for some distance. The current drifted it against the bank, when Don Iturbide got ashore. In the meantime, the horse had succeeded in gaining the bank, and had started off home, where his arrival without his rider threw our host's young wife into the greatest anxiety. Servants were despatched to search for him, and these met their master following his runaway steed upon foot.

In about two hours we reached the top of the mountain,

which, from a height of between three and four thousand feet, commands a fine prospect over the plain of Zacapa. We could see the neat white town glistening among its gardens. The many-hued fields, neatly divided from each other, gave the landscape the appearance of a coloured map, bordered by mountains and varied by tracts of forest.

On crossing the ridge of the mountain, we beheld below another fine plain extending away to a great distance; and afar off we could see the town of Chiquimula, our next objective point, while near to it we could detect the immense ruins of the ancient church which tradition states to have been wrecked by earthquakes. The mountain chain on which we were was much broken by ravines and jagged ridges of rock, among which thousands of pretty plants had taken a hold and softened by their beauty the rugged features of the rocks. In the distance the hills were veiled by a warm haze, and their hues were a mixture of the pale colours of the silvery and rose-coloured mimosæ which grew thickly over the slopes. A fatiguing descent along a zigzag path brought us to the plain, which, like that of Zacapa, was well tilled, and grew great quantities of plantains, corn, and cochineal. Crossing this plain, we forded a river, and after mounting a high bank, we entered Chiquimula just at three o'clock. This town gives its name to the department. In the plaza, which occupied the centre of the town, a fine fountain threw jets of sparkling water into the sultry air; and shaded as it was by tall palms, gave rise to a sense of coolness and relief from the burning air of the plain. This fountain, with its graceful shady palms, called to my mind an image of the East. Women were grouped around it exchanging gossip: some were drawing water, while others stood by with their jars balanced on their heads, their picturesque costumes and graceful forms heightening the interest of the scene.

We had no difficulty in finding lodgings. In the first street which we entered we found a clean and comfortable house, with stables at the back; and having made our terms for the whole party with the owner, Will and I sallied forth to view the town. We first walked to inspect the great church which had arrested our observation from the hills as we approached the plain of Chiquimula. It is situated by the edge of a table-land, and is two hundred and fifty feet in length by seventy-five feet in breadth: the walls are ten feet thick. The façade is adorned with statues of saints, which are larger than life, and have kept their sad vigil in their niches for many a generation since the temple was deserted.

On entering we observed that the roof had fallen in, and that the space within the walls was encumbered with vast masses of masonry overgrown with bushes and trees. It was melancholy to see so fine a church, which once had resounded with the praises of God, given over to the bat, the owl, and the snake; but, as has been already said, it was so shaken by earthquakes that the Chiquimulans deemed it safer to leave it and to build another church elsewhere. The neighbourhood was covered with the ruins of the ancient village; but the spot is now only used as a grave-yard for the adjacent town. Some of the chief families have their places of interment within the great church; and we observed some niches in the interior walls containing the bones of priests and other religious persons, with the names of the deceased written underneath. The space immediately outside was the burying-ground of the common people. Here all was uncared-for and neglected: weeds covered the graves and waved in the wind, which seemed to sing the dirge of the dead in its mournful cadence as it sighed through the ruined walls or rustled among the rank vegetation. But melancholy thoughts seem out of place in this brilliant climate. The ground was

plentifully gemmed with glowing flowers; flocks of parrots screamed harshly as they flashed in all their wealth of colour from point to point, and their ceaseless chattering, together with the warmth of the air, the brightness of the flowers, the luxuriant beauty of the vegetation, and the fecundity of nature, banished all morbid ideas, and divested death itself of half its repulsiveness.

On leaving the church we returned to the town, which we reached just as the sun declined towards the western horizon. Troops of ruffianly soldiery lounged about, having just been dismissed from evening parade; and not liking the banditti-like air of these fellows, Will and I took great care to avoid them. There was little to see in the village, and we were therefore not sorry to leave the streets, where our presence attracted a good deal of attention, which might at any moment become unpleasant. We took an early supper and retired to bed, as we had to start betimes in the morning. We accordingly rose at five o'clock, and by six were under way. We passed close by the ruined church, which threw a prodigious shadow in the early sunlight, and were conducted by our guides through a very closely cultivated valley, where we were on all sides surrounded by Indian corn of tremendous height, bearing testimony to the great fertility of the soil. In half an hour we reached the village of San Estevan, where, greatly to our astonishment, we saw a vast cathedral-like church rising in grandly solemn magnificence high above the wretched thatched huts that surrounded it. On a nearer approach we discovered that this church, like that of Chiquimula, was roofless and ruined—a melancholy memento of former greatness. The sun streamed through its unmullioned windows; its façade was defaced; its ornaments dropping to decay; its statues mouldering away; dead silence encompassed it; and it took no great

stretch of fancy to imagine that the old building was brooding sullenly over its vanished splendour.

Near San Estevan we noticed acequias running in various directions, leading water to the fields which the villagers wished to irrigate. These little canals were fed by a small stream, which has its source in the adjacent mountains. We crossed this stream, which was bank high from the recent rains, and after much searching we at last hit upon the "king's road;" which turned out, despite its high-sounding title, to be a mere bridle-path, leading up the acclivity of the mountain range verging on the stream. As we advanced the wildness of the country increased, as did also the difficulty of the path. Thick brushwood lined both sides of the miserable track, which the grandiloquent natives entitle "El camino real." Now and then we heard the rustle of some animal cautiously retreating through the thickets, alarmed at our approach; but owing to the impervious screen of branches we were unable to get a shot. At one point of the path our guide suddenly halted and started back in alarm. On going forward a few paces I found myself close to a huge python in an inert condition, coiled up by the side of the track, and apparently quite unconscious of being observed. He was about the thickness of a man's thigh, and was partly concealed beneath a dense flowering bush that grew close to the muddy pathway. The mules smelt him, and could hardly be persuaded to pass; but at length we got them past the reptile, and having sent them on for about a hundred yards, Will and I began operations on the python. He seemed so still and impassive, Will declared his belief that he was dead; and with this idea he approached the great reptile and poked him with the muzzle of his rifle. In a moment the python started into life, and raising his head stared for an instant

at his assailant; and then opening his huge jaws he made a vicious lunge forward almost into Will's face, withdrawing his head at the same moment, as if his intention had been to hook his enemy with his formidable teeth. Will sprang back in terror, never expecting such a sudden resurrection; and the python quietly unloosed his coils and began to slip away through the brushwood. Just as his tail was disappearing beneath the brush, I made a cut at it with my large wood-knife, or machete, and nearly severed the reptile in two. But this was more than his patience could endure. He abandoned the idea of flight, and came back like lightning, his eyes shooting forth a blaze of anger, and his jaws distended to their utmost stretch. So quick was his attack that I had hardly time to cock my rifle before he emerged from the bushes. I fired a hurried shot at the hideous head, and, although not fatal, it smashed the creature's lower jaw to pieces. Will now fired, and with better aim, for his ball struck between the eyes, passed through the skull, and traversed about three feet of the neck and body, coming out underneath, as we afterwards discovered. It was painful to watch the death-struggles of this monster. He was about eighteen feet in length, and of considerable bulk, so that in his furious contortions his great weight smashed down the underwood. He twined and untwined himself, pretty much as does an eel when landed by a fisherman. Will showed considerable activity in making cuts at him when a chance offered, and then springing aside to avoid the frantic threshing of the reptile's body, which was now streaming with blood from the bullet-holes and knife-wounds. We left him before he got quiet, and as we followed the mules we could hear him crashing and rustling among the bushes for some little distance.

We reached the top of the mountain at eleven o'clock, and

from this vantage-ground we could see the houses of Chiquimula reduced to a few glistening dots in the distance; and in the valley to the right we descried the village of St. Helena, over which towered, in ruined magnificence, another of those splendid old churches, which, demolished as they are, bear evidence to the zeal and piety of the ancestors of the present very degenerate inhabitants of this country. Around were lofty mountains, cloud-capped, and varied in their wildness of feature. Some were stony, broken by rugged cliff and peak; others were smoother in outline, covered with dark green mantles of forest, through which here and there I could detect green patches of pasture. In these openings among the forests the haze of distance seemed to nestle, and speckled the hills with its soft and dove-coloured hues. Jagged spires of rock broke the sky-line of portions of these ranges. Cones, pyramids, and many other wild, fantastic forms, were outlined against the distant clouds. The valley was flooded by the fiery noontide tropic sunlight, and the prospect altogether was one of extreme grandeur, softened by the beauty of the woods and the delicate shades that seemed to float over them.

The blue-black clouds behind the mountains were moving swiftly upwards, and their edges seemed to melt into a ghastly pallor, which indicated that their contents were descending in torrents. Near by was a deserted hut, covered with the leaves of the cahoon; and seeing that the storm would break in less than half an hour, we took refuge in this asylum and awaited the coming of the deluge. We could trace its progress towards us. The valley was still lighted by the warm, brilliant sun, but dark shadows raced down the distant mountains and overspread the landscape with extraordinary rapidity. A cold gray gloom replaced the full glow of the sun, and we could see the crests of the palms and other trees

bend suddenly, while their pendulous branches stretched out like hair to leeward as the fierce wind seized upon them. Mile after mile was added to the territories of the storm king in quick succession, and we soon felt the temperature falling. The air became chilly, we heard a rushing sound, heavy drops began to fall thinly upon the roof, sudden darkness blotted out the sun, a fierce gust tore through the forest, and in an instant the deluge was upon us. How it rained! The ground, which a moment before had been dry and baked, now was covered with a miniature sea, which ran off in little torrents wherever there were depressions. The noise on the roof was deafening, and we fully expected to see it beaten in. The valley was invisible through a drifting world of vapours, through which we could dimly trace the lines of rain which slanted like ropes through the gloom. It only wanted thunder and lightning to complete the picture. But on this occasion these were absent.

Our mules turned their tails to the deluge, and stood the picture of patience with drooping heads while the water poured off them in sheets. The tempest went down as quickly as it had arisen, and in half an hour the sun again shot his unclouded beams upon the scene, which now glittered and flashed with the brightness of the myriad jewels with which the rain had decked each branch, rock, and blade of grass. The country was soaked; but the fervid heat shortly absorbed this excess of moisture, and in a few hours there remained little, if any, trace of the storm.

We started as soon as the rain ceased, and shortly descended to a narrow and deeply enclosed valley, over which towered lofty mountain ridges. One of these was composed of red sandstone, which, where exposed, seemed like flame in the full light that fell upon it. In other parts it was covered with a thick growth of immense pines, among which

there was no underwood, the red rock appearing at intervals where the surface was denuded by torrents.

During this day's ride we observed no fewer than seven ruined churches, all of gigantic proportions. The present inhabitants of the country must have deteriorated sadly; they could not erect such monuments of piety as did their forefathers. Strife and rapine and unending civil commotion have been the curse of the Hispano-American race, and are the real causes of the backward condition of everything.

We perceived, as we rode along, about four o'clock in the afternoon, the ruins of the great church of Jocotan, surrounded by the humble cottages of the villagers. Towards sunset we emerged upon a fine table-land, on which we perceived the remains of another great church, which seemed the sepulchral monument of a pious people who had long since passed away. Surely these vast and splendid edifices could not have been erected by a population intent only on the things of this world. It was sad to see those colossal buildings roofless and crumbling to decay, and to think that the ancient piety which had elevated such temples had been banished from the land by ceaseless internecine feuds as senseless as they were wicked. But eternal turmoil seems the destiny of these beautiful countries. As I write I learn that in the latest political convulsion ten thousand people have been rendered homeless, and four million dollars worth of property destroyed, in the strife between San Salvador and Guatemala.

The country in many parts has been desolated by civil war: all industry languishes; the towns and villages present the sad spectacle of deserted streets, often grass-grown and silent, and of people dejected and listless. For this state of things continued peace under vigorous and energetic govern-

ment is the only remedy. But the governments of Central America are in the hands of men who, as a rule, consult only their own ambition and selfish greed, and are regardless of all else.

At Comotan we had evidence of the paralyzing effects of misgovernment. The streets were empty; the centre was marked by an uncertain track; the rest was grass-grown up to the walls of the houses. Not a soul was in sight. The church was empty; even the prison windows were untenanted. An oppressive silence rested on the place. The westering sun threw broad shadows across the streets; and golden light tinted the roofs and eaves of the houses, and illumined the gigantic old church, which in its decay was as sad an evidence of a deteriorating people as the deserted town.

We had great difficulty in finding any provisions. Our guides at length returned to us at the Cabildo with half a dozen eggs and one very attenuated chicken. The dejection of the place had seized upon us, and we said nothing. Will sighed and gloomily plucked the anatomic fowl, whose bones were starting through the skin. I roasted the eggs, and in silence we consumed our meal. We were apathetic to the hunger of the guides; they had nothing. But we both felt that they were suffering a just punishment for having brought us to such a place; and I make it a rule never to interfere with the course of justice. While we ate, and the guides looked sadly on, a cock crew. The sound was electric in its effect. Will looked up briskly; his eye met mine; we nodded intelligence. The bird had sung his death-song. On the top of a wall fifty yards away strutted chanticleer. The glory of the sunset encompassed him. He raised his head heavenward, clapped his wings, and again woke the unaccustomed echoes with his clarion battle-call. It was a noble spectacle!

The sharp crack of a rifle rang through the town; a solitary feather floating slowly earthward marked the spot lately occupied by the gallant fowl, whose plump carcass fell upon the ground with a soothing and appetizing sound. In a moment he was secured, and in three minutes divested of his feathers and split open. He hissed and sputtered merrily on the embers. Our guides were thus provided for and restored to good humour. We paid the owner of the bird what we thought to be a fair price; but he was far from being satisfied, contending that the loss of the fruitful father of future flocks of poultry could not be compensated for by the paltry sum we offered. He wanted to be paid for fowls that had not yet been hatched, and which now never would be hatched.

Will discovered a way out of the dilemma which was both satisfactory and amusing. Turning to our guides he asked them if they could scold. They replied that they could do a little in that way. "Then," said Will, "oblige me by discharging a few of your most convincing expletives at this rascal." Immediately both fell upon him and vociferated at the top of their lungs, heaping maledictions upon him, and pressing upon him, fairly thundered him out of the house! We laughed loud and long, and slung our hammocks to pegs, which some extraordinarily energetic alcalde had caused to be driven into the walls for the accommodation of travellers.

Early next morning we left this decaying town. As we passed through the streets we met no one; the inhabitants were still in their hammocks. The early sun streamed among the deserted dwellings and upon the emerald green grass skirting the mule-track between them; not a sound was heard except those which we made as we paced slowly along. It struck me as unnatural to see such a number of human habitations apparently deserted—no traffic in the streets, a

dead silence over all, while the bright morning sun shone cheerfully from a cloudless sky.

In this country one is always either going up or coming down mountains, and although at first the variety of the landscapes is some compensation, it at last becomes monotonous, and the fatigue occasioned by the steep paths forces itself unpleasantly on the notice. Shortly after leaving Comotan we began to ascend a mountain, from the top of which we had a splendid view of the lovely valley which we had left and which was still in a natural condition. Man had hardly done anything to turn to account the bountiful gifts showered upon this beautiful land; the plains were almost without cattle; and the forests, which form such a mine of wealth, were untouched. Although from an economic point of view this was to be regretted, neither Will nor I were sorry to note the general stagnation, which left Nature in her primitive condition. We were in search of the wild and the beautiful; and we had not as yet been able to regard agricultural improvement as compensation for the demolition of forests and the banishment of game. I fear we hold still to this opinion.

At half-past twelve o'clock we saw before us, dashing among stones and reflecting the glorious emerald hue of the overhanging foliage, the Copan river. We began to feel as if our journey were at last approaching its completion. To see Copan was the object of our expedition, and as we struggled through the deep ford we felt more impatience to traverse the slight distance that still intervened between it and us than we had yet felt at any time during the journey. The passage of the river was difficult; the bed was uneven, and the water rushed impetuously over large stones. To add to these obstacles, in the centre of the stream there was a sand-bar, the edges of which were soft and deep. We had

become adepts in rough travel by this time, and these obstructions did not dismay us. After leaving the river the path led up a steep acclivity, from the top of which we beheld the Copan winding through the valley beyond, having made a sudden turn round the high ridge upon which we stood. At the bottom of this slope we struck a beautiful stream, which we supposed to run into the Copan. The water was as pure as crystal, and the bottom was of clear golden gravel with quartz sand intermingled. Along the banks grew mighty trees densely veiled in trailing moss (*Tillandsia*), pyramids of blossoms tinged the river with their reflection, frail and lace-like vegetation filled the spaces between the taller growth, and rapid, stream, and woods shone and sparkled at ten thousand points in the full splendour of the afternoon sun. We caught a passing glimpse of a spectacle which is rarely seen in the woods, although, perhaps, this is owing to the absence of spectators. A dim green vista opened back from the path, and at its farther end was a small clear space, at one side of which stood a tall clean-stemmed tree, upon which the sunlight fell fully. Standing on its hind legs against this tree, and sharpening its claws exactly after the manner of a cat, was a graceful little "leon." It passed its claws rapidly along the bark of the tree, the sunshine illumining its chestnut-coloured coat. I immediately halted and drew my friend's attention to it; but at this moment it saw us, and after an astonished stare it bounded lithely into the forest. The hue of these animals seems to differ with locality. They have often been observed of different shades of brown and chestnut.

There is another animal from which the hacienderos suffer —the black puma, or black leopard, as it is often called. It is said that this animal is fast disappearing owing to the increase of jaguars, which will not allow it to live in the

same district with them. This may or may not be true with regard to these two creatures; but it is certainly true of others, as, for instance, the Norway and the old brown rat. The jaguar is stronger than the black leopard, and if he objects to living in the same region with that animal, he possesses both courage and strength enough to evict him.

At four o'clock we reached the point at which we were to leave the "camino real." Here we turned aside into a wild track obstructed with bushes and large stones, and so steep that we deemed it safer to dismount and make our way downwards upon foot, than to intrust ourselves to the mules, which had quite enough to do to get along lightened of our weight. Again our course ascended, for here the country is more hilly than usual, and our progress was constantly up hill and down again; and exhausted as we were, it was with surprise and pleasure we saw at a little distance, surrounded with gardens of plantains, tobacco, and corn, a neat-looking house—that, is for the country. It was built of wood, the outside being plastered with mud; but this was white-washed, and the projecting thatch threw a deep cool shadow against the clean white wall, which seemed all the whiter and cooler for being embowered in lianas that trailed over the roof and hung pendent in picturesque festoons between the posts supporting the eaves. Tall flower-decked trees shaded the house at the back; and through an opening in these, distant blue mountains were visible. It was a peaceful and a lovely spot in which to pass away life; but even here, I suppose, the rose was not without its thorn.

The owner stood at a little gate which opened in the fence that separated the house from the pathway. He was a somewhat fierce-looking fellow, swarthed almost black by the sun, and the shadow of his large sombrero still further deepened the colour of his face. However, he was very

civil, and in reply to our request for a night's shelter invited us to enter. The interior was clean and tidy, and the general disposition of the scanty furniture seemed to bespeak a woman's superintendence. Almost as soon as I noticed this, our host's wife made her appearance. She had been among the plantains, and was returning to cook her husband's supper. She was eminently good-looking, but had a sad expression on her handsome face, which, for want of a better reason, we ascribed to the utter seclusion in which she lived. She seemed pleased to see strangers, and set about her hospitable preparations with such a good will that we felt quite at home immediately. She said we were the only visitors they had had for the previous six months, and she thought it likely that she would not see so many strangers again for six months more. Her husband was a tigrero, or tiger-hunter, and the walls of his house were hung with many a spotted hide. He sold them at intervals, and said that he got a good deal of money in that way. His plantain patch, his tobacco, and his little field of corn, constituted the remainder of his resources; and he remarked, that although by no means "muy rico" (very rich), he was happy and had enough. This was philosophy, and we did not dispute it.

After supper we slung our hammocks and very soon fell asleep, notwithstanding the myriad strange and wild noises that proceeded from the entangled forest outside. In the tropics nocturnal life is more active than that of day, and the air resounds with weird noises which it is not always easy to account for, and which at first almost deprive the traveller of sleep.

CHAPTER XI.

BAD TRAIL—PICTURESQUE CLEARING—ALOES—DIFFICULT TRACK—DEEP ABYSS—THE COPAN AGAIN—HACIENDA—DON IGNACIO DE SELLAS—HOSPITALITY—SHARP SHOOTING—A WALK IN THE FOREST—BEAUTIFUL SCENES—LOST—TRACK OF A MONSTER SNAKE—LOOKING FOR THE TRAIL—FIRE-FLIES—JAGUAR—NIGHT IN THE FOREST—THE PUMA—HIS HORRIBLE HABIT OF DOGGING THE TRAVELLER—A STRATAGEM—DEATH OF THE PUMA—GET OUT OF THE FOREST—COPAN—SENSATIONS AWAKENED BY IT—HISTORY—THE RUINS.

We left the hacienda at an early hour. Our kind entertainers would not accept any remuneration for the hospitality which we had received from them, and with many kind wishes both on our side and on theirs, we struck into a dense forest which covered a steep hill close to the farm. The path was a quagmire almost as bad as that which leads over the Mico mountain. The distance to the top of the ascent, however, was not so great in the present instance, nor were there so many roots stretched treacherously across the track. We floundered along in some parts with a good deal of difficulty; but higher up the ground was drier, and we shortly gained the summit. Here was an open space; that is, it was almost free from forest trees, but it was covered with beautiful plants of many species, among which aloes were the most numerous. They were of all sizes;—some were only just appearing from the soil; some were five, ten, or fifteen feet in height; while others towered above us as we rode through them—some of these were fully thirty feet high. Many were dead, and their great stalks lay about

at every angle, supported against others still vigorous and covered with blossoms. It was an image of death in the midst of life, and *such* life! This small clearing was a wilderness of beauty.

Over it were scattered hundreds of flowering plants of every hue and of every variety of shape and size in their blossoms. At intervals were single trees, which seemed to have been planted by man's hand to give a park-like aspect to the little meadow. Beneath, between, and upon these were wreaths, festoons, and piles of blossom. A splendid and inextricable labyrinth of gorgeous plants surrounded us: foliage and flowers contended for supremacy on every twig and branch; lianas of every degree of thickness twined serpent-wise around the trees, and having exhausted the accommodation of trunk and branch, sent down pendent streamers covered, like all the rest, with beautiful flowers. These parasites are among the most exquisite objects in creation. When entwined round the forest trees they fill every spot with their leaves and blossoms; and when at length the tree decays and falls to the earth, they form its sepulchre. It moulders away wrapped in an impenetrable maze of tendril and blossom.

Green alleys extended among the gorgeous enclosures formed by the lines of tall plants and detached trees; and the emerald grass, as well as the extraordinary wealth of flowers, both on the ground, overhead, and on either hand, acquired additional effulgence from the bright morning sun. It was a veritable fairyland, and I looked about me scarcely believing that all this beauty was not a dream.

For several hours we struggled up and down mountains, sometimes shut in among dense sweltering jungles, and again commanding vast and varied prospects from the summits of the hills. At one point we passed close to the edge of a

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precipice at the foot of which grew great pines, but which in the profound depth were dwarfed to the apparent height of a few feet. Riding by the brink of such a tremendous abyss is trying to the nerves, and I would have been glad to dismount if there had been room. But having once entered on the dangerous portion, I had no option but to trust to the sure-footedness of my mule. Slowly and gingerly the animal felt its way, my right foot hanging the while over the verge of the cliff. I *could* look past it down into the tops of the trees far beneath; but although I had the opportunity of doing so, I preferred to look the other way, and inclined inwards as far as I could, so as to fall on that side in case of an accident. We got safely past this place; but we seemed a long time passing it. Not far from this precipice our guides pointed out the boundary between the territories of Guatemala and Honduras, in which latter State we now were.

Early in the afternoon we suddenly came in sight of a collection of miserable huts thatched with corn-stalks. On asking the guides what the name of this place was, they answered "Copan"! We could hardly believe that we heard aright, but they reiterated the name. We looked at each other and laughed aloud. Was this Copan, that celebrated relic of olden time and extinct civilization? Where were the gigantic ruins of palaces and temples, of streets and squares and great public buildings? Certainly not here. We asked the guides. "Quien sabe," they replied; "who knows? we never saw them"!

We pushed forward to the huts, where we were immediately surrounded by a group of wondering natives. Ourselves, our belongings, etc., were evidently objects of extraordinary curiosity. Visitors were a rarity, and the treat was to be made the most of when within reach. We inquired for the ruins; but to our astonishment, and I may

almost add to our dismay, no one seemed to know anything about them! Such is the stupor in which the natives of these gardens of Eden are sunk. They know nothing and care for nothing. Disgusted by the ignorance of the villagers, we determined not to halt among them. We therefore pushed on and again came to the Copan river, which having forded we emerged at the other side on a clearing where we were rejoiced to see a house of some pretension. It had a tiled roof and was surrounded with cocina and other out offices, which marked it at once as the residence of a rico or rich landed proprietor. As soon as we were fairly in view of the house we were instantly set upon by a half-score of dogs of every degree of size and ferocity. Two of these were speedily disabled by well-directed kicks from the mules, and the others retreated before our whips and the missiles hurled at them by the guides. Not a human being was visible: the doors were on the latch, but there was no one either within or without, as far as we could perceive. We took French leave, however, to the premises. Our mules were unpacked and were soon rejoicing in the fine pasture in front of the house, and we loitered about in expectation of some one presently turning up to bid us welcome. We soon heard the dogs again give warning, and a moment after we heard quick hoof-beats on the meadow. It was the proprietor, who had returned from visiting a friend, attended by several servants. He seemed rather taken aback on seeing strangers in possession of the doorway of his house; but he courteously bade us welcome, and placed his hacienda and all in it at our absolute disposal. This phrase, however, was too Spanish to mean much; we had heard it often under circumstances in which its use was a mere farce. But Don Ignacio de Sellas, our present acquaintance, seemed kindly disposed, and we were therefore ready to believe his professions. I may here

state that our confidence in the Don was not misplaced. He was extremely kind, and he gave us great assistance by sending men with machetes and axes to clear away the thick entangled growth of weeds and trees that covered the ruins.

Our first care was to get something to eat. We had not halted to refresh ourselves since starting in the morning, and our appetites were very keen. Don Ignacio perceiving that we eyed the lumps and strings of beef that hung from the ceiling with a hungry expression, ordered dinner to be prepared for us. A huge piece of bacon and three or four fowls were put together into a pot and set over the fire; a massive gordita was placed on the table flanked by two half-gallon jars, one of which contained vino de coyol, or palmetto wine,* and the other a sweet thick liquid, supposed to be wine, and which was manufactured by our host himself.

As soon as the bacon and fowls were ready they were placed steaming hot upon the table. Don Ignacio invited us to "draw in," which we did with alacrity, for the savoury smell of the smoking dainties made our mouths water. The guides were well provided for in an apartment at the back of the house, so that when we had at length satisfied our tremendous appetites we found them outside the house enjoying their cornshuck cigaritas upon the grass under the shade of some trees.

Our host was a great hunter, and had a perfect arsenal of weapons in his sitting-room. He was greatly taken with our Winchesters—a weapon he had never previously seen. He had unbounded confidence in a double "Lang" rifle

* This liquor is obtained in the following manner:—A palmetto is cut down, and a deep hole chiselled out near the top, at the part whence spring the leaves. This hole must be cut through the pulp of the tree, and is covered with a piece of bark to serve as a lid. In a few hours the cavity will be found full of a frothy liquid, slightly yellow in colour, and of a sweet yet pungent flavour. It is very refreshing, and becomes stronger if the tree is allowed to lie in the sun for a couple of days, which produces fermentation. A longer exposure renders the juice intoxicating.

which he had picked up at Belize from some sporting Briton who had no further use for it. With this weapon Don Ignacio could shoot with great accuracy; but we were surprised to see that he had removed the back sights, as he said they prevented him from shooting quickly. In the forest the range was never more than sixty or eighty yards, often much less, and for these short distances the sights were quite needless. He put up an ace of spades on a tree, and at eighty yards, firing from the shoulder standing, he put six bullets into it out of eight shots, shooting alternately from each barrel. This was very good work, but absolutely astonishing when done without the guide formed by the back sights.

Will, not to be outdone, took another card from the Don's pack, and to my great satisfaction made a better score. The Don, however, had it all to himself when it came to hitting moving objects. This was a kind of shooting which neither Will nor I had ever practised, and we made execrable attempts to rival the great skill of our host, who hit the greater proportion of objects fired at. Several birds which flew past fell to his bullets, to our great surprise. Satisfied, at length, with his manifest superiority, Don Ignacio returned his rifle to its rack and proposed that we should visit the ruins. But we were fatigued, and, as it was growing late, we determined to put off our visit until the following morning, when we would have a long day to devote to an examination of them.

The Don assented, and begging us to use his house and servants as if they belonged to us, and apologizing for leaving us, as he had some business to attend to, he mounted his mule, and, touching his hat politely to us, started off at full speed. As soon as he was out of sight, we took our rifles and walked across the meadow to the forest. The sun was

sinking towards the west, and his beams shot through the thick foliage only at intervals. Much of the space among the trees was in deep shadow, through which we could vaguely trace the stems of palms, mahogany trees, tamarinds, and others, rising like the pillars in a dimly lighted cathedral. Here and there the forest was partially illumined by the slanting sheaves of sunbeams that fell through openings in the branches, and which streamed far away through the woods, lighting up many a golden vista as we advanced, and transforming the rough trunks into pillars of amber. Overhead we could hear monkeys scrambling among the tree-tops; parrots chattered and screamed and sometimes shot through the rays of light, glancing with gorgeous sheen for an instant. The monkeys were grave and sad-looking creatures. They seemed devoid of that lively curiosity characteristic of the species, and sat among the branches as we passed, eying us with solemn gravity.

We could have shot scores of the creatures; but we could not associate the idea of sport with such slaughter. We saw no game during our ramble; but we shot two snakes—a tuboba, and another, the cascabel, which is the native name for the common rattlesnake. In a patch of mud which we passed we noticed the broad smooth trail of a monster snake —a python. These grow to a great size, and there are stories among the natives of some having been seen thirty feet in length and as thick as a man's body! One of this size would weigh about three hundred pounds. It is not improbable that many individuals of the species attain great bulk and length. One twenty feet long, however, is a large specimen. They prey on deer and other animals, crushing them to death in their powerful folds. As has been noticed in the case of the contest already described between a python and a jaguar, and in the adventure which we ourselves had with another,

these giant reptiles are no despicable antagonists for man himself. If seized suddenly, and his arms pinioned by the snake twining himself round the body, a man would be squeezed to death in a few moments. If, however, he had a sharp knife and had his hands free, a few good slashes would soon terminate the affair.

As darkness was fast falling on the forest, we turned to retrace our steps. We pushed along rapidly, in order to get back to the hacienda in time for the early supper which Don Ignacio had told us would be prepared for us. The sunlight had faded away, and a deep gloom, a double night as it were, filled the woods, so that although outside the trees it was as yet hardly twilight, beneath their heavy canopy we had scarcely light to pick our way. We had gone too far, led on by the beauty of the vegetation, which with infinite variety continually presented us with some fresh object of interest, and now on our return the increasing darkness and thick entanglement of underwood rendered us uncertain in what precise direction the hacienda lay. As usually happens under such circumstances, we differed as to the route. Will maintained that we ought to go straight west, which point we knew by the deep flush of the heavens visible now and then between the trees. I stoutly held that we ought to go south, as after entering the woods we had continually borne to our left—that is, to the north—and consequently a southerly course would bring us out on the meadow or clearing in which stood the hacienda. I argued my point with all the rhetoric at my command; but my friend was sure I was wrong. Finally we decided to go west for some distance, and if we did not then strike the meadow, we would alter our course agreeably to my ideas. We set off immediately towards the west, walking very swiftly and running where this was possible. There was not even the

semblance of a path, and we crashed through masses of plants —blossom-laden and heavy with perfume—often brought up with a jerk by a tough liana stretched between the trees, and now and then we had to turn aside from some impenetrable jungle. Will began to get doubtful that this was the proper track; however, he accounted for the difficulties we met by the absence of light. When we entered the woods, he said, we saw where we were going, and that made a great difference. I said nothing, and we held on. We presently came to a stream rushing swiftly over its rocky bed, the foam of its mimic rapids being dimly discernible in the darkness. This was a poser. We certainly had not crossed any stream when wandering into the forest; therefore it was quite clear that we should not cross one in getting out.

"Give it up!" said Will, in the tone of one relinquishing an attempt to solve a riddle. "I don't know where we are; that's the fact." I ran over in my mind all the recipes I had heard of among Western hunters for discovering a lost track. The only one that seemed likely to be of use was to sit calmly down, and keep flurry and fear at arm's-length. To get lost in such a luxuriant wilderness of forest, where every tree seemed the twin brother of its neighbour, and where track there was none—the whole forest being one impenetrable interlacement of lianas, palmettos, palms, bamboos, etc., with occasional mahogany trees and other tall full-foliaged forms—meant certain death unless we could find our way out of it. It is true we had our rifles, but we had brought but a few rounds of ammunition—only, in fact, the cartridges that happened to be in the magazines when we started, and these were very few, owing to the shooting match with Don Ignacio. I knew, however, that by mounting some high hill we could command a wide prospect, and in this way we might be able to discover the whereabouts of

the hacienda. In the meantime there was nothing to be done until the morning light enabled us to proceed through the entangled woods and make our way to a mountain top. We therefore sat down, hot and fatigued, upon a little bank beneath the spreading branches of a mahogany tree. The brook danced past in the gloom, and its merry gurgle and splashing relieved us through the hours of darkness. We knew that in all probability this stream joined the Copan river, and that if we followed it down to its junction and then turned up the Copan we would at any rate strike the ruins, which our host had told us lay within a few miles of his house. When this idea occurred to us we felt easier, and lighting our pipes we lay on the bank, chatting and admiring the glimmer of the cocuyos as they flitted to and fro among the trees. There are several kinds of fire-fly in this country. The cocuyo is the largest, and gives light enough to read print by, if the insect be held close to the paper and "brightened up" occasionally by being rubbed against it. There is another kind, the gusanito, much smaller than the cocuyo, and also less brilliant. The male alone is furnished with wings, and during the hours of darkness he may be observed flitting with uncertain glimmer through the woods or over the opens. During the day the female lies hid among the grass or leaves; but on the approach of night she emerges from her retreat, and in company with her mate, who flies and circles about her, emits her pale gleam at intervals as she crawls over the forest paths. The gusanito is of a brownish-black colour, and is the same insect that has received the name of "lightning bug" from the unpoetical inhabitants of the Southern States of North America.

Over the brook there was a space free from branches, and in this opening we noticed several large birds hovering, occasionally flitting on extended wings downwards towards

the water, and flapping past our faces so closely that we could feel the fanning of their wings. These were vampires. There are two or three species of these birds in the tropical forests of America. Their chief food consists of insects, of which there are countless species in these woods. They by no means confine themselves to insect diet, and have been often known to attack animals; and even man himself is not exempt from contribution. Some assert that the sharp nail on their wings is made use of to make a puncture, to which the mouth is then applied, and the blood sucked in large quantities. During this operation they keep up a constant fanning with their large wings, which soothes the victim, and prevents him from being awakened. One kind is a foot or more in length, and has an alar spread of two feet. It is the smaller sort that attacks man. There are many other kinds of bats in Central America, but they are purely vegetable or insect feeders, and are quite harmless.

We had been fully two hours seated by the brook, when Will drew my attention to two luminous spots which I had not noticed among the myriad shining specks which gave a twilight glimmer to the woods. These lights were steady, and seemed to have *expression* in them, of which the other scintillating sparks were destitute. We both looked long and hard; and it did not need the whispered "Jaguar!" from Will to convince me that we were being ogled by a fierce tiger, who no doubt was debating with himself the nice question of whether we were or were not good to eat. We hesitated about firing at him. There was no light to sight by, and if we only wounded the animal he would instantly charge upon us. Uncertain how to act, we did nothing but simply stare at the gleaming orbs. Our steady stare seemed to have some effect, for the eyes appeared to flicker—that is, their owner withdrew them now and then—and suddenly they dis-

appeared altogether. We now felt very uneasy. The jaguar might be only prowling round us in order to spring unawares from some other quarter. We were surrounded by a dense and impenetrable thicket, which offered him just the sort of cover he liked, and through which, with the extraordinary stealth that characterizes the *felidæ*, he could slink almost without indicating his movements by the least noise. An hour of great anxiety passed. Every sound that proceeded from the vegetable walls that enclosed us made us start; and the spectral forms of the vampires, as they flitted backwards and forwards and chased each other, seemed to our nervous imaginations little better than demons peculiar to these wild and inhospitable scenes. Towards midnight we were relieved by seeing the heavens lighten, as the moon climbed higher and higher. Her beams found many a chink in the apparently solid roof of the forest, and fell in peaceful pools of misty silver upon the earth. As soon as the light fell fairly upon the spot where we lay, Will and I left our retreat under the mahogany and stood close to the brook, with our backs to it. We guessed the jaguar had not crossed that, and if he meant to attack us he would appear from some other direction. We listened intently, but the rushing of the stream and the various noises which issued from the woods drowned any lesser sounds. We finally came to the conclusion that the jaguar had taken himself off; and as there was now light enough to enable us to continue our search for the hacienda, we followed the brook, intending to keep by it until we reached the Copan river. By this means we knew we would recover our bearings.

Our progress, as may be supposed, was difficult. Lianas stretched like ropes from tree to tree across our path; and in the alternate gloom and moonlight, it was hard to distinguish between obstacles and their shadows. Vines, bam-

boo-briers, thorny bushes, apparently a kind of mimosa, prickly pears, and other underwood, filled up every available space between the taller growth of palms, tree-ferns, abanicos, palma real, corozos, etc., which towered overhead and threw shades as dark as ebony upon the entanglement beneath. Not seldom we were brought up with a round turn by a bamboo-brier or thorny liana striking us in the face as we pushed through the dense jungle. By the course of the stream the vegetation was probably thicker than elsewhere, but we did not venture to leave it lest we might not be able to find it again. A white fleecy mist rose off the water and hung above it in heavy folds, surcharging the branches with moisture, which dashed upon us in showers. We held on towards the west for more than an hour, in which time we certainly should have struck the Copan outside the forest if we had been going in the right direction. We therefore again halted in a small open space surrounded by the tremulous crests of palms and gigantic tree-ferns, beautiful even in the subdued light which veiled half their gracefulness of foliage. The moon by this time was high in the heavens, and lighted up the little clearing almost as brightly as the sun on a cloudy day. This clearing was about half an acre in extent, and was most probably caused by a more or less constant overflow from the brook, which in the season of continuous rains no doubt transformed it into a pond, and thus killed off the trees. At this time it was covered with grass, weeds, and a pinkish flower two or three feet in height. We had advanced into this high grass about fifty yards when Will stopped and listened. I was about to ask him what he had heard, when I heard a soft, long-drawn sigh, from the verge of the forest. We did not need its repetition to ascertain its nature. We knew at once it was the cry of the "leon" or puma. We had often heard of the horrible habit

this animal has of dogging travellers for miles through the forest, never appearing, but always close at hand, trailing his long body stealthily through the woods, silent and ghost-like, green-eyed and hungry. Our first thought was, of course, that he was after us. We looked with the utmost intentness back upon our trail, which was distinctly visible through the tall weeds. A waving motion was slowly passing through it towards us. There was no doubt we were followed. There are few things in the wild life of this country so trying to the nerves as being stalked mile after mile by a puma. When we consider the nature of its haunt—the dim, mysterious forest, thick and entangled, instinct with life and re-echoing with the calls and cries of unknown creatures; the ghastly moon stealing through and checkering the jungle with dense black shadow, and misty, uncertain light; the weird consciousness on the part of the traveller of the grim attendant, and the suggestive rustle and waving of the vegetation, marking its almost silent path; the invisibility of the animal, which stops as the traveller stops, and advances as he advances, placing its round paw upon his foot-marks, and keeping its fell eye upon him through the gloomy woods,—we can easily understand how this fearful presence will work upon the mind and drive the wayfarer out of his senses. If, in desperation, he returns a few yards upon his trail in order to bring matters to a crisis, he will see nothing—a rustle, a wave among the grass, silence! The beast has vanished. But on every foot-mark which the man has left behind him, he will see the huge, cat-like track of his pursuer. Again he rushes forward, beads of perspiration starting to his forehead: instantly the long rustle of the weeds and underwood announces that the spectral monster is anew upon his track, his head held low, and the light of hunger in his fierce green eyes.

As we stood in the moonlight, we had a good view of the broken and trampled grass where we had passed along. We saw the waving motion I have mentioned suddenly cease; and this showed us that the puma had ascertained that we were halted, and had stopped also. We crossed the open space and entered the woods. As we did so we looked back, and my blood ran cold as I again distinctly saw the grass bending aside from the passage of the animal. We held on through the forest, and after a few minutes listened again. A faint, silky rustle, not twenty yards from us, proved that our pursuer was still after us. We went towards the spot from which the sound had come; but there was nothing to be seen except the tell-tale "pugs." An idea now occurred to me. I would advance, making slightly more noise than needful, in order to make sure that the beast should hear me. Will would lie *perdu* by the side of the track, and ambush him as he passed. In a moment this project was put into execution. I crashed through the brushwood, making a good deal of noise, and held on for about a hundred yards. I each moment expected to hear the report of Will's rifle, and was ready to rush back to his assistance at that instant. I had been gone only about two minutes when the forest re-echoed with the sharp crack of my friend's Winchester; another and another shot followed, accompanied by a loud, snarling roar. In a moment I took the back track, and found Will standing over the long, red carcass of our treacherous and vindictive follower. It happened just as we had hoped and expected. The animal followed swiftly on my trail on hearing me pushing my way through the woods in front; but at the instant that it reached a spot opposite where Will lay concealed, it halted and turned its gleaming eyes in his direction. A current of air had carried the taint of his presence to its sharp nostrils. Will

aimed as well as he could in the uncertain light between the scintillating orbs, and fired. The ball struck rather lower than he intended, but at the report the puma leaped from the ground and uttered the roar I had heard. A second and third shot followed, and these proved sufficient.

We would have gladly carried the hide as a trophy with us, but we were too anxious to discover the direction of the hacienda to delay for the space necessary to flay the carcass. We held a hurried consultation as to our next course. Hitherto we had been going due west, and although we had certainly gone east when we entered the forest, I was almost certain that we had deflected considerably towards the north. I therefore felt pretty sure that by striking south from where we stood, we would hit upon the great clearing round Don Ignacio's hacienda. We lost no time in coming to this conclusion, but started off at our best pace. In an hour we had the satisfaction of seeing light ahead, and presently we saw before us the meadow with the dark outlines of the hacienda amid its grove of trees clearly visible at the distance of half a mile. We saw dark objects hurrying about, and heard the blowing of horns and the firing of guns. It was a search-party which were just starting after us, led by the Don in person. He had become alarmed at our sudden and unaccountable disappearance; and as we had been seen entering the forest, the true state of affairs gradually dawned upon him. It often happens that a person who enters these verdant wildernesses without due precaution—that is, without observing his course, and without a proper knowledge of the geography of the district—is never heard of again. He gets "turned round" just in the same manner as has already been noted in connection with the great plains of North America, and is in that condition capable of any folly. He rushes blindly through the flowery wilderness—beautiful, yet under

the circumstances horrible; fatigue shortly brings his wild career to a stop, hunger weakens him, or perhaps he is followed by the leon and becomes his prey. "Swiftly, mistily night comes down. The maddened traveller walks on and on, falling wounded, half-dead, with weariness, and sinks at length under some time-hoary tree. Then the great eyes flash nearer and nearer, until they glare hungrily into his face. And if he be awake, they disappear again with a long rustle of the brushwood; but if he be asleep, they burn and blaze over him. And then a sharp, sudden cry is heard, a savage growl, a momentary struggle, and then the undergrowth cracks and sways as the beast drags slowly through."* This is a very likely fate to befall any one so unfortunate as to get lost in the verdant wildernesses of Tropical America.

Don Ignacio told us that we were most fortunate in getting out so easily. He had lately lost one of his best men, who had wandered out with his gun into the same forest. The general opinion was that the man had lost his idea of direction, and had plunged deeper and deeper into the trackless woods. He may, however, have met with his end under other circumstances. Jaguars, pythons, and innumerable venomous snakes, would equally account for his disappearance.

Our hospitable host gave us a hearty welcome back to his hacienda, and accentuated it by a most welcome supper. When we had eaten our fill, we went to bed; and I, at any rate, fell into a deep, refreshing sleep, undisturbed by any unpleasant visions of crouching pumas thirsting for my blood.

Notwithstanding our fatigues of the preceding day, Will and I awoke early. The day was bright—as indeed what day is not in this country?—and there was a steady though light breeze, which tempered the heat and added to the sense of exhilaration produced by the summer scene. It promised to

* Frederick Boyle, "A Ride Across a Continent."

be a perfect day for the exploration of our ruins, and after breakfast Don Ignacio accompanied us on the expedition. He had never made a thorough exploration of Copan himself, nor could he hear that anybody else had done so. Dense jungle covered the most of the relics of the great city, and the small area which has been examined bears but a small proportion to the great extent of the place.

It gives the visitor a strange feeling to come suddenly on these great ruins, lying desolate amid the rich tropical vegetation that covers them. On all sides lie great masses of stone, pyramidal structures, broken terraces, idols, and overturned altars, speaking eloquently of an ancient people and an extinct civilization, of which they alone form the sum of our knowledge. Who built these vast cities? If we could discover a clew to the hieroglyphics which are chiselled on their monuments, we might know. A gloom as impenetrable as that of night hangs over their origin, and invests them with a mystery which heightens the impression of sadness that steals over the spectator as he contemplates the scenes of the life and labour of an unknown but once powerful people. Dense jungle and tall forest trees grow upon and among the crumbling walls. Gorgeous creepers enshroud them in their variegated drapery; monkeys swing themselves among the overhanging branches; and snakes, bats, lizards, and all manner of crawling, creeping things, make them their residence. Where are the people that once lived here? At what time did they become extinct, and what catastrophe produced their disappearance? These are questions which have been many times put, but there is as yet no answer. There is some slight evidence to show that some of these cities were inhabited at a comparatively recent date. Some assert that at the Spanish Conquest Copan was in all its glory. It is extraordinary to contemplate the utter apathy

displayed by the inhabitants of Spanish America with regard to the history of these giant cities. They regard them as of no more interest than the rocks or mountains of the country. Those who live close to them hardly know of their existence, and can venture no further than "Quien sabe?" if asked as to their extent. It may be assumed as tolerably certain that the whole, or the greater part, of the North American continent was at some former period inhabited by populous nations, which had made considerable advances in the arts of peace. The clearing away of the great forests has disclosed many tumuli or mounds, fortifications, and other evidences of extinct races. Mummies have been found in a cave in Kentucky; inscriptions have been discovered carved upon rocks; and in both Arkansas and Wisconsin ruined walls and the remains of a large city attest the civilization of the primitive inhabitants.*

As we proceed southwards these relics become more frequent as well as more perfect. As regards the state of preservation of the ruins of Mexico and Central America, the greater mildness of the climate may account for it to some extent; but it is stated by some writers that the course of migration of the race that left these monuments behind them was from north to south. If this be true, the ruins of the south are probably of much more recent date than those farther north, which may help to account for their better condition.

Early Spanish historians make mention of a city named

* Since writing the above, a statement, vouched for on apparently respectable authority, has appeared in the newspapers, that in the State of Missouri an ancient city has been discovered at a depth of three hundred and sixty feet under ground during some boring operations in connection with a coal mine. The streets are described as laid out at right angles; the houses substantial and commodious; and the whole was stated to be arched over by a flood of congealed lava. Tools of bronze were found; also some of flint. A skeleton was discovered, and is described as of a gigantic size. In the earlier part of this work, the reader's attention was drawn to a discovery, at a great depth, of animal remains at Julesburg.

Copan, which they located in pretty much the position occupied by the ruins of that name. They represented the city as inhabited by a warlike people, who offered great opposition to the Spanish invaders. There are, however, some discrepancies in their statements which render it doubtful whether the city alluded to could be identical with what we now know as Copan. The city referred to by the historians stood in the ancient province of Chiquimula de la Sierra, which was overrun by the victorious followers of Pedro de Alvarado. No detailed account has been given by these old writers of the conquest. The conquered race attempted to regain their independence in 1550, but were again reduced to pray for peace by Hernandez de Chaves, who was despatched to subdue them. The Indians, however, struggled bravely for a time, and many bloody battles were fought before they finally yielded to the Spanish yoke. The town of Esquipulas, the capital of the province, was surrendered to Hernandez de Chaves by the cacique who held it, and with the fall of the capital the rebellion collapsed.

"The cacique of Copan, whose name was Copàn Calel, had been active in exciting the revolt and assisting the insurgents. Hernandez de Chaves determined to punish him, and marched against Copan, then one of the largest, most opulent, and most powerful places of the kingdom. The camp of the cacique, with his auxiliaries, consisted of thirty thousand men, well-disciplined veterans in war, armed with wooden swords having stone edges, arrows, and slings. On one side, says the historian, it was defended by the ranges of mountains of Chiquimula and Gracias a Dios; and on the opposite side by a deep fosse and an intrenchment formed of strong beams of timber, having the interstices filled with earth, with embrasures and loop-holes for the discharge of arrows. Chaves, accompanied by some horsemen well armed,

rode to the fosse and made sign that he wished to hold a conference. The cacique answered with an arrow. A shower of arrows, stones, and darts followed, which compelled the Spaniards to retreat. The next day Chaves made an attack upon the intrenchment. The infantry wore loose coats stuffed with cotton, swords, and shields. The horsemen wore breastplates and helmets, and their horses were covered. The Copanes had each a shield covered with the skin of the danta on his arm, and his head was guarded by bunches of feathers. The attack lasted the whole day. The Indians, with their arrows, javelins, and pikes, the heads of which were hardened by fire, maintained their ground. The Spaniards were obliged to retreat. Chaves, who had fought in the thickest of the battle, was alarmed at the difficulties of the enterprise and the danger to the credit of the Spanish arms, but received information that in one place the depth of the ditch which defended Copan was but trifling, and the next day he proceeded to the spot to make an attack there. The Copanes had watched his movements, and manned the intrenchment with their bravest soldiers. The infantry were unable to make a lodgment. The cavalry came to their assistance. The Indians brought up their whole force; and the Spaniards stood like rocks, impassable to pikes, arrows, and stones. Several times they tried to scale the intrenchments, and were driven back into the fosse. Many were killed on both sides; but the battle continued without advantage to either, until a brave horseman leaped the ditch, and his horse being carried violently with his breast against the barrier, the earth and palisades gave way, and the frightened horse plunged among the Indians. Other horsemen followed, and spread such terror among the Copanes that their lines were broken, and they fled. Copàn Calel rallied at a place where he had posted a body of reserve; but

unable to resist long, retreated and left Copan to its fate." *

From this narrative, taken from the early Spanish historians, one would naturally infer that the defences of the city were of a merely temporary character, or at least that they were such as might have been erected within a short period. This inference would seem to indicate that the Copan of the above narrative cannot be identical with the ruins with which we are familiar.

As our party reached the Copan river, the first object that attracted our observation on the opposite bank was a gigantic wall of cut stone, carefully built, and apparently rising out of the water. This wall was in very tolerable preservation; and in the days when Copan was inhabited must have formed an almost impregnable defence. We essayed to cross the river towards it; but finding it too deep, we went up the bank for a little distance, and here the water was wide and broken into shallows. The bottom, however, as we had hitherto found on nearly every occasion, was stony and difficult, and caused our mules to stumble about a good deal. The other bank was thickly clothed with a vigorous vegetation, which had to be cleared off with machetes before we could advance. For this work Don Ignacio had brought several of his men; and owing to this act of kindness, we were enabled to make a better examination of the ruins than we otherwise could have hoped for.

On arrival at the great wall we mounted it by the aid of stone steps, which were in many places in a perfect state of preservation, but in others had been displaced by the growth of bushes and trees in their interstices. At the top we found ourselves on a great terrace, overgrown with dense jungle, which concealed its extent and form. Don Ignacio's

* "Travels in Central America." By John L. Stephens.

men preceded us and hewed a path; and following close upon them we now and then observed some relic of the ancient time—fragments of sculpture half buried in the rich vegetable mould, portions of columns thickly covered with carving, figures of men clothed in strange and cumbrous garments, with impossible head-dresses and stolid features. We presently found ourselves at the base of a high pyramidal mass of masonry, with flights of steps on its sides, but hidden under a thick growth of shrubs and trees. Near this was a tall square pillar of stone, about fourteen feet in height, and having sides probably of three feet across. This was encumbered with a vast amount of very boldly relieved carving from the base to the top. In front was a human figure or idol, dressed in highly ornamented garments, and with a grim and awful expression, which no doubt in olden time often inspired superstitious worshippers with terror. The back of this column was quite different in design from other monuments: in front was a large sacrificial stone or altar, also covered with emblematic figures in every variety of execution. We did not fail to observe the accuracy here, as well as everywhere else upon our journey, of Mr. Stephens's descriptions. His observations at Copan were so exactly similar to our own that I cannot do better than present them to the reader. In speaking of this stone altar he says:—

"The sight of this unexpected monument put at rest at once and for ever in our minds all uncertainty in regard to the character of American antiquities, and gave us the assurance that the objects we were in search of were interesting not only as the remains of an unknown people, but as works of art, proving, like newly-discovered historical records, that the people who once occupied the continent of America were not savages. With an interest perhaps stronger than we had ever felt in wandering among the

ruins of Egypt we followed our guide, who, sometimes missing his way, with a constant and vigorous use of his machete conducted us through the thick forest among half-buried fragments, to fourteen monuments of the same character and appearance, with some more elegant designs, and some in workmanship equal to the finest monuments of the Egyptians: one displaced from its pedestal by enormous roots, another locked in the close embrace of branches of trees and almost lifted out of the earth; another hurled to the ground and bound down by huge vines and creepers; and one standing with its altar before it in a grove of trees which grew around it, seemingly to shade and shroud it as a sacred thing—in the solemn stillness of the woods it seemed a divinity mourning over a fallen people.

"The only sounds that disturbed the quiet of this buried city were the noise of monkeys moving among the tops of the trees, and the cracking of dry branches broken by their weight. They moved over our heads in long and swift procession, forty or fifty at a time; some, with little ones wound in their long arms, walking out to the end of boughs and holding on with their hind feet or a curl of the tail, sprang to a branch of the next tree, and with a noise of a current of wind passed on into the depth of the forest. It was the first time we had seen these mockeries of humanity, and, with the strange monuments around us, they seemed like wandering spirits of the departed race guarding the ruins of their former habitations.

"We returned to the base of the pyramidal structure and ascended it by regular stone steps, in some places forced apart by bushes and saplings, and in others thrown down by the growth of large trees, while some remained entire. In parts they were ornamented with sculptured figures and rows of death's heads. Climbing over the ruined top we

reached a terrace overgrown with trees, and, crossing it, descended by stone steps into an area so covered with trees that at first we could not make out its form, but which, on clearing the way with the machete, we ascertained to be a square, and with steps on all the sides almost as perfect as those of the Roman Amphitheatre. The steps were ornamented with sculpture; and on the south side, about halfway up, forced out of its place by roots, was a colossal head, evidently a portrait. We ascended these steps and reached a broad terrace, eighty feet high, overlooking the river, and supported by the wall which we had seen from the opposite bank. The whole terrace was covered with trees, and even at this height from the ground were two gigantic ceibas, or wild cotton-trees, above twenty feet in circumference, extending their half-naked roots fifty or a hundred feet around, binding down the ruins and shading them with their wide-spreading branches.

"We sat down on the very edge of the wall and strove in vain to penetrate the mystery by which we were surrounded. Who were the people who built this city? In the ruined cities of Egypt, even in the long-lost Petra, the stranger knows the story of the people whose vestiges are around him. America, say historians, was peopled by savages; but savages never reared these structures, savages never carved these stones. We asked the Indians who made them, and their dull answer was, 'Quien sabe?' (Who knows?) There were no associations connected with the place, none of those stirring recollections which hallowed Rome, Athens, and

'The world's great mistress on the Egyptian plain;'

but architecture, sculpture, and painting, all the arts which embellish life, had flourished in this overgrown forest; orators, warriors, and statesmen, beauty, ambition, and glory,

had lived and passed away, and none knew that such things had been, or could tell of their past existence. Books, the record of knowledge, are silent on this theme. The city was desolate. No remnant of this race hangs round the ruins, with traditions handed down from father to son, and from generation to generation. It lay before us like a shattered barque in the midst of the ocean, her masts gone, her name effaced, her crew perished; and none to tell whence she came, to whom she belonged, how long her voyage, or what caused her destruction; her lost people to be traced only by some fancied resemblance in the construction of the vessel, or perhaps never to be known at all. The place where we sat, was it a citadel from which an unknown people had sounded the trumpet of war? or a temple for the worship of the God of peace? or did the inhabitants worship the idols made with their own hands, and offer sacrifices on the stones before them? All was mystery, dark, impenetrable mystery, and every circumstance increased it. In Egypt the colossal skeletons of gigantic temples stand in the unwatered sands in all the nakedness of desolation; here an immense forest shrouded the ruins, hiding them from sight, heightening the impression and moral effect, and giving an intensity and almost wildness to the interest."

This graphic description of the sensations aroused by the sight of these sad memorials of a vanished race exactly portray the effect this extraordinary spectacle had upon me. I sat and pondered, and in fancy again beheld these ruins erect in all their pride of strength and beauty, their inhabitants crowding the thoroughfares, or streaming towards the temples or sacred places for the purposes of worship. The air resounded with the trumpets and cymbals accompanying their gay processions; the altars streamed with blood, and the expiring groans of the offerings rose above the devout

murmurs of the vast assemblage. But the dream vanished almost as soon as indulged: the gibing forms of the monkeys replaced the ancient inhabitants, and the dissonant chatter of the parrots or the rush and splash of the Copan beneath the wall alone disturbed the stillness of the jungle. We sat long musing, upon our elevated vantage-ground. Any desire for conversation was extinguished; we felt as if in the presence of the dead, and levity seemed so unsuited to the scene that I believe a laugh would have startled us almost as much as it would in a church.

The sun was setting as we turned to descend, and from our high position we beheld his beams streaming in a flood of crimson glory along the top of the forest, which lay spread before us vivid with brilliant hues, and varied by many a graceful form shooting above the general level. Above, the sky was aflame with the glare of the sinking luminary; and beneath rushed the river, now in shadow and again gleaming with a deep glow, and vanishing beneath the heavy green curtain which the forest extended above it. It was a beautiful sepulchre for the ruined city. Wall and altar, pyramid and terrace were buried in forest; bignonias and all the myriad flowering parasites common to the country twined and trailed over them and almost covered them up from sight; and down upon this inextricable confusion of life and death shone the setting beams of the same sun which had in the days so long gone by given light to the vanished people who dwelt here.

We returned to the hacienda, and grudged our night's rest in our anxiety to continue our explorations.

CHAPTER XII.

COPAN—STEPHENS'S NARRATIVE—EXAMINATION OF THE RUINS—HIEROGLYPHICS—FEELINGS AROUSED BY THE SPECTACLE OF THE RUINED CITY—QUARRIES—BEAUTIFUL PROSPECT—THE COPAN RIVER—HUGE SNAKES—TUBOBA—REPTILES—TWILIGHT ON THE FOREST—COCUYOS—MYSTERY HANGING OVER COPAN—MELANCHOLY FEELINGS—RETURN TO THE HACIENDA—LAST SIGHT OF COPAN.

EARLY the next day we again directed our steps to Copan. Don Ignacio had sent on men with machetes to clear away as much of the jungle as possible, so that we had little exertion beyond standing by to see the gradual development of the various relics as the creepers and underwood were cleared away from them. Here again Mr. Stephens's narrative is so nearly a record of our own observations that I avail myself of it :—

"It is impossible to describe the interest with which I explored these ruins. The ground was entirely new; there were no hand-books or guides; the whole was a virgin soil. We could not see ten yards before us, and never knew what we should stumble upon next. At one time we stopped to cut away branches and vines which concealed the face of a monument, and then to dig around and bring to light a fragment, a sculptured corner of which protruded from the earth. I leaned over with breathless anxiety while the Indians worked, and an eye, an ear, a foot, or a hand, was disentombed; and when a machete rang against the chiselled stone I pushed the Indians away and cleared out the earth with

my hands. The beauty of the sculpture, the solemn stillness of the woods, disturbed only by the scrambling of the monkeys and the chattering of parrots, the desolation of the city and the mystery that hung over it, all created an interest higher, if possible, than I had ever felt among the ruins of the Old World."

In speaking of the history of the ruins Mr. Stephens writes :—

"Huarros, the historian of Guatemala, says: 'Francisco de Fuentes, who wrote the Chronicles of the Kingdom of Guatemala, assures us that in his time—that is, in the year 1700—the great circus of Copan still remained entire. This was a circular space surrounded by stone pyramids about six yards high, and very well constructed. At the bases of these pyramids were figures, both male and female, of very excellent sculpture, which then retained the colours they had been painted with; and what was not less remarkable, the whole of them were habited *in the Castilian costume!* In the middle of this area, elevated above a flight of steps, was the place of sacrifice. The same author affirms that at a short distance from the circus there was a portal constructed of stone, on the columns of which were the figures of men likewise represented in *Spanish habits*, with hose, and ruff around the neck, sword, cap, and short cloak. On entering the gateway there are two fine stone pyramids, moderately large and lofty, from which is suspended a hammock that contains two human figures, one of each sex, clothed in the Indian style. Astonishment is forcibly excited on viewing this structure, because, large as it is, there is no appearance of the component parts being joined together; and though entirely of one stone and of an enormous weight, it may be put in motion by the slightest impulse of the hand!'

"From this time—that is, from the year 1700—there is

no account of these ruins until the visit of Colonel Galindo in 1836, who examined them under a commission from the Central American Government, and whose communications on the subject were published in the 'Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society of Paris,' and in the 'Literary Gazette' of London. He is the only man in that country who has given any attention *at all* to the subject of antiquities, or who has ever presented Copan to the consideration of Europe and our own country. Not being an artist, his account is necessarily unsatisfactory and imperfect, but it is not exaggerated. Indeed, it falls short of the marvellous account given by Fuentes one hundred and thirty-five years before, and makes no mention of the movable stone hammock with its sitting figures, which were our great inducement to visit the ruins. No plans or drawings have ever been published, nor anything that can give even an idea of that valley of romance and wonder, where, as has been remarked, the genii who attended King Solomon seem to have been the artists.

"It lies in the district of country now known as the State of Honduras, one of the most fertile valleys of Central America, and to this day famed for the superiority of its tobacco. Mr. Catherwood* made several attempts to determine the longitude; but the artificial horizon which we took with us expressly for such purposes had become deranged, and, like the barometer, was useless. The ruins are on the left bank of the Copan as you ascend; which river empties into the Motagua, and so passes into the Bay of Honduras near Omoa, distant, perhaps, two hundred miles from the sea. The Copan river is not navigable even for canoes, except for a short time in the rainy season. Falls interrupt its course before it empties into the Motagua. Cortez, in his

* Mr. Stephens's companion.

terrible journey from Mexico to Honduras, of the hardships of which, even now when the country is comparatively open and free from masses of enemies, it is difficult to form a conception, must have passed within two days' march of this city.

"The extent along the river, as ascertained by monuments still found, is more than two miles. There is one monument on the opposite side of the river, at the distance of one mile, on the top of a mountain two thousand feet high. Whether the city ever crossed the river and extended to that monument it is impossible to say. I believe not. At the rear is an unexplored forest in which there may be ruins. There are no remains of palaces or private buildings, and the principal part is that which stands on the bank of the river, and may perhaps with propriety be called the Temple.

"This Temple is an oblong enclosure. The front, or river wall, extends in a line north and south six hundred and twenty-four feet, and is from sixty to ninety feet in height. It is made of cut stones from three to six feet in length, and a foot and a half in breadth. In many places the stones have been thrown down by bushes growing out of the crevices; and in one place there is a small opening, from which the ruins are sometimes called by the Indians Las Ventanas (or the windows). The other three sides consist of a range of steps and pyramidal structures, rising from thirty to one hundred and forty feet in height on the slope. The whole line of survey is two thousand eight hundred and sixty-six feet; which, though gigantic and extraordinary for a ruined structure of the aborigines, that the reader's imagination may not mislead him, I consider it necessary to say, is not so large as the base of the Great Pyramid of Ghizeh.

"Near the south-west corner of the river wall and the south wall is a recess, which was probably once occupied by

a colossal monument fronting the water, no part of which is now visible: it may have been broken and the fragments buried or washed away by the floods of the rainy season. Beyond are the remains of two small pyramidal structures, to the larger of which is attached a wall running along the right bank of the river: this appears to have been one of the principal walls of the city, and between the two pyramids there seems to have been a gateway, or principal entrance from the water.

"The south wall runs at right angles to the river, beginning with a range of steps, about thirty feet high, and each step about eighteen inches square. At the south-east corner is a massive pyramidal structure, one hundred and twenty feet high on the slope. On the right are other remains of terraces and pyramidal buildings; and here also was probably a gateway, by a passage about twenty feet wide, into a quadrangular area two hundred and fifty feet square, two sides of which are massive pyramids one hundred and twenty feet high on the slope.

"At the foot of these structures, and in different parts of the quadrangular area, are numerous remains of sculpture. At one point is a colossal monument richly sculptured, fallen and ruined. Behind it fragments of sculpture, thrown from their places by trees, are strewed and lying loose on the side of the pyramid from the base to the top; and among them our attention was forcibly arrested by rows of death's heads of gigantic proportions still standing in their places, about half way up the side of the pyramid: the effect was extraordinary."

These figures presented a strange and weird appearance, grinning eternally in that solitary place; and this result was heightened considerably when the uncertain rays of the moon half hid and half revealed their features. They excited sen-

sations of the "uncanny" order, and suggested the blood-stained rites of a people sunk in the hopeless darkness of pagan superstition.

It may be observed that it is doubtful whether these sculptures are intended to represent the heads of men or of monkeys. We noticed the remains of a gigantic figure which was undoubtedly meant to represent an ape, lying broken upon one of the sides of the pyramid. The head had been broken off, and we searched in vain for it among the fragments of other sculpture, stones, and bushes: the trunk lay wedged among a quantity of stones which had become detached from the pyramid. It is possible that these figures may have been objects of worship among the inhabitants of Copan. If they worshipped monkeys, however, there were then no doubt plenty of the living animals procurable in the country, and it seems more likely to suppose that these would be selected as deities, in preference to their sculptured images. But it is idle to speculate upon the eccentricities of pagan superstition.

On the south-east side of the cleared area of the ruins we observed a tall column encumbered with sculpture, which, as it were, formed a setting for a human figure, the arms being brought to the front of the body, the fingers turned upwards, and the backs of the hands turned towards each other. The front of this monumental idol faces the east, and it is placed about two yards from the base of the pyramidal wall. It is thirteen feet in height, four feet broad in front, and three feet in depth. It is covered on all sides with sculpture, which is of a more elaborate character than any which we observed at Copan. This idol had evidently been painted, as it still bore traces of a red colour. Most likely this colour was selected in order to excite terror, as well as being more appropriate to a deity worshipped, as we may suppose, with

human sacrifices. Before it was a large sacrificial stone or altar, having in front a human figure of full size, the face of which, from its softer expression and smooth outlines, seems to be that of a female.

It would be quite impossible to give anything like a detailed description, in the space at my disposal, of the many and varied monuments left behind by the ancient inhabitants of this place. In every direction we stumbled upon some statue or idol or piece of sculpture; altars and ornamental masses of stone met us at every turn; pyramids, and ranges of terraces, with rows of death's heads staring grimly upon us, fallen walls and pyramidal elevations (having once probably borne altars on their summits) lay around us, their outlines, and indeed more or less of their area, hidden beneath a thick growth of trees and bushes, which made it well-nigh impossible for us to arrive at an accurate estimate of the general shape and disposition of the great city of which they were part. Mr. Stephens, who, with his friend Mr. Catherwood, gave much time and trouble to their examination, writes as follows of a portion of the ruins: "On the right is a confused range of terraces running off into the forest, ornamented with death's heads, some of which are still in position, and others lying about as they have fallen or been thrown down. Turning northward, the range on the left hand continues a high, massive, pyramidal structure, with trees growing out of it to the very top. At a short distance is a detached pyramid tolerably perfect, about fifty feet square and thirty feet high. The range continues for a distance of about four hundred feet, decreasing somewhat in height, and along this there are but few remains of sculpture.

"The range of structures turns at right angles to the left and runs to the river, joining the other extremity of the

STONE IDOL AT COPAN.

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wall at which we began our survey. The bank was elevated about thirty feet above the river, and had been protected by a wall of stone, most of which has fallen down.

"The plan was complicated and, the whole ground being overgrown with trees, difficult to make out. There was no entire pyramid, but at most two or three pyramidal sides, and these joined on to terraces or other structures of the same kind. Beyond the wall of enclosure were walls, terraces, and pyramidal elevations, running off into the forest, which sometimes confused us. Probably the whole was not erected at the same time, but additions were made and statues erected by different kings, or perhaps in commemoration of important events in the history of the city. Along the whole line were ranges of steps with pyramidal elevations, probably crowned on the top with buildings or altars now ruined. All these steps and the pyramidal sides were painted, and the reader may imagine the effect when the whole country was clear of forest, and priest and people were ascending from the outside to the terraces and thence to the holy places within, to pay their adoration in the temple.

"Within this enclosure are two rectangular court-yards, having ranges of steps ascending to terraces. The area of each is about forty feet above the river. Of the larger and most distant from the river the steps have all fallen, and constitute mere mounds. On one side, at the foot of the pyramidal wall, is a monument or idol. It is about the same height with the others, but differs in shape, being larger at the top than below. Its appearance and character are tasteful and pleasing, but the sculpture is in much lower relief: the expression of the hands is good though somewhat formal. The back and sides are covered with hieroglyphics."

The visitor who has arrived at this point among the

ruins cannot fail to perceive a huge monolith, or single block of stone, which, there can be little doubt, once served the purposes of an altar. It differs from all the other altars found in Copan. As a rule they are only moderately ornamented, and, owing to their not being much elevated above the earth, are much effaced by time as well as covered with moss and other vegetable matter. This great stone, however, is an exception. Perhaps it formed the 'high altar,' at which the most sacred rites were performed on occasions of peculiar solemnity. It stands," says Mr. Stephens, "on four globes cut out of the same stone; the sculpture is in bas-relief, and it is the only specimen of that kind of sculpture found at Copan, all the rest being in bold alto-relievo. It is six feet square and four feet high, and the top is divided into thirty-six tablets of hieroglyphics, which, beyond doubt, record some event in the history of the curious people who once inhabited the city. The lines are still distinctly visible. The sides of this altar are adorned with human figures. Those on one side all face one way, while of those on the other, the two at each side face towards the two at the other side."

Describing these Mr. Stephens says: "On the west side are the two principal personages, chiefs, or warriors, with their faces opposite each other, and apparently engaged in argument or negotiation. The others are divided into two equal parties, and seem to be following their leaders. Each of the two principal figures is seated cross-legged, in the Oriental fashion, on a hieroglyphic which probably designates his name and office or character; and on three of which the serpent forms part. Between the two principal personages is a remarkable cartouch containing two hieroglyphics well preserved, which reminded us strongly of the Egyptian method of giving the names of the kings or heroes in whose

honour monuments were erected. The head-dresses are remarkable for their curious and complicated form: the figures have all breastplates, and one of the two principal characters holds in his hand an instrument which may perhaps be considered a sceptre; each of the others holds an object which can only be a subject for speculation and conjecture. It may be a weapon of war; and if so it is the only thing of the kind found represented at Copan. In other countries battle-scenes, warriors, and weapons of war, are among the most prominent subjects of sculpture; and from the entire absence of them here, there is reason to believe that the people were not warlike, but peaceable and easily subdued."

Will and I rambled long among these strange buildings, overawed by their massive sublimity. We could as yet hardly realize that these wonderful monuments of a departed and obscure people were undoubted facts. Here in the midst of the jungle, surrounded on all sides by the wild luxuriance of nature, cut off from the world, and civilized society merely a faint recollection, it gave rise to a feeling of inexpressible sadness to contemplate the former scenes of man's existence, of his wealth, his arts, and his industries, now silent and desolate; his dwellings effaced, his temples ruined, his gods overthrown, and his altars the basking-places of lizards or other reptiles, while there was no one able to guess at his fate or even to conjecture whence he came. I recommend Copan as a suitable residence for those who desire to retire from the world to contemplate the vanity of all worldly aspirations. Here they will have plenty of material for solemn reflection; and if they cannot be impressed by the vanity of human wishes upon the scenes once occupied by the rich striving to be richer, by the poor striving to gain wealth, by the ambitious struggling to attain their ends, and

by the other multiform varieties of human life in all its phases, from the cradle to the grave, they cannot hope to be impressed by such considerations anywhere in this world.

We visited the ancient quarries of Copan, where were procured the stones with which the city was constructed. Two Indians led the way, hewing open with their machetes a track which had become overgrown by the riotously luxuriant vegetation of these regions. We followed them through many a scene—though the distance was short—of wild and tangled beauty. At the bottom of a descent we crossed a dashing stream, which glanced wherever a sunbeam penetrated the heavy foliage, and vanished down a long vista in the forest, reflecting in its smoother reaches the flower-gemmed tendrils of bignonias and other parasitic plants that twined about the trees on its banks. We ascended a mountain on the opposite side of the river, and from the summit, which was quite free from trees, we beheld, stretched out below us, the splendid forest through which we had been journeying; and we could perceive the course of the Copan river across the landscape—here flashing in the sun, or there revealing its track through the forest by a dark line which marked the divided woods. There were but two or three clearings visible, and these constituted the sole traces of human influence on the whole of the vast expanse of country comprised within the range of our vision. The ruins of Copan were nowhere visible; they were completely enshrouded in forest. "Imagination peopled the quarry with workmen, and laid bare the city to their view. Here, as the sculptor worked, he turned to the theatre of his glory, as the Greek did to the Acropolis of Athens, and dreamed of immortal fame. Little did he imagine that the time would come when his works would perish, his race be extinct, his city a desolation and abode for reptiles, for strangers to

gaze at and wonder by what race it had once been inhabited."*

We were astonished to see the route by which the immense blocks of stone had been conveyed from the quarry to the city. The track was broken and rugged, and how those ancient engineers overcame the difficulties of transportation neither of us could imagine. But when we saw one of these enormous blocks elevated as a monument on the summit of a hill two thousand feet high, the lesser marvel ceased to be a subject of astonishment.

We passed many great blocks which had been thrown aside owing to some defect in their cutting or in their material; and at the bottom of a slight declivity, which terminated in a hollow, lay a vast stone which we supposed either to have been too heavy for removal, or which had been abandoned from some other motive. It is difficult to estimate correctly the enormous labour necessary to hew out these gigantic stones from their bed in the rocks, and to convey them by a difficult and irregular track to their destination at the city. Now-a-days science has placed many powerful agencies at the disposal of the workman; but at that distant date few, if any, of these existed. It is supposed that the blocks were hewn and fashioned by means of a very hard species of stone called chaystone; and numerous fragments of this are found among the ruins.

We enjoyed a fresh breeze upon the mountain top, and gazed long and silently at the splendid panorama that lay spread out around us on all sides. We felt that it would be the last time we should behold it; and as we at length turned to descend, it was with regret that I withdrew my eyes from the scene to fix them upon the rough and toilsome path by which we had come.

* "Travels in Central America." By J. L. Stephens.

When we reached the river, which we struck at a spot a short distance above the ruins, we halted for a little in order to rest. The scene here was of course confined to the bed of the river; but even within that small compass how much beauty was crowded! At the foot of the bank the Copan swiftly rushed onwards to the ruins, its surface smooth and unbroken, and reflecting along its centre the blue of the heavens, which merged into the many hues of the mirrored woods at either side. I cannot hope to picture to the reader the rich softness of the foliage; the glittering, waving crests of the tall palms; the flower-sheeted breast of the forest which fronted us; and all the waving, trailing, gorgeous entanglement with which tropical nature has so lavishly endowed this country. The air was heavy with perfume; misty spokes of light shot afar through the woods, revealing their recesses, and here and there glowing on some blossom-laden tree, about which flashed and whirred myriads of gaily-coloured-humming birds.

We sat on a rock by the edge of the river and watched the current passing the wealth of foliage on the banks, so smoothly and swiftly, and yet so silently, that it rather seemed a strange illusion than a reality. Happening to glance aside through the trees at our side of the river, I saw a strange sight. Coiled round a branch about ten feet from the ground, his long sinuous body twined through a fork, and his tail appearing round the trunk of a tree, was a huge snake, his head and part of his length hanging downwards towards the ground, and his fangs extended; while another huge reptile lay coiled up underneath, with head erect and distended jaws, between which the other seemed disposed to strike. Whether this was a serpentine mode of salutation, or whether the two loathsome monsters were about to fight, neither of us could determine, and Will did not give them

time to show. Scarcely had he seen them when he faced round, and with a very clever shot, considering that the reptile was undulating backwards and forwards and was about fifty yards distant, he smashed the pendent serpent's head to atoms. I fired at the other, and the bullet struck among his coils, but did not disable him. We ran after him, and both of us kept up a fusilade, sometimes hitting and often missing him in our hot haste. We finally killed him. On returning to the tree we saw the other still plunging and writhing about in the last agonies, in pretty much the same way as the one which, as the reader will remember, we killed by the side of the road after leaving San Estevan. The larger of these two reptiles was twenty feet in length, and weighed, as well as we could judge, about two hundredweight. Their skins shone in the sun with a variety of passing colours. Some people describe snakes as "beautiful" or "graceful," and go into ecstasies over their hues. To me they are inexpressibly disgusting. They are in the physical what sin is in the moral order; and I never lost an opportunity of shooting them, which I felt to be almost a religious duty. Between us, Will and I "used up a pretty tall heap of snakes," as our old friend Rube would say, during our sojourn in this country. On several occasions we had very narrow escapes from being bitten by poisonous species, of which there are many varieties. There are also other intensely poisonous reptiles. There is a dull-looking lizard the mere sight of which will scare the bravest tigrero from the spot. It is said that this dreadful creature is so poisonous that a mere touch upon a booted foot is sufficient to cause death! Mr. Frederick Boyle, who spent a considerable time in Central America, and has given us a very interesting narrative of his adventures, states that he received from Dr. Flint of Granada an account of a reptile

whose poisonous properties almost exceed belief. The first case that came under the doctor's notice was that of a man found dead one morning with the complete impress of a lizard's body burned into his back! A short search disclosed the reptile's body. It was dead, having apparently been crushed by the weight of the man lying on it. Another case was that of a healthy young woman who put her foot—hardened, by long habit of walking barefoot, into the consistency of leather—upon one of these reptiles in the woods. Though Dr. Flint used every remedy he could devise, she finally died in great agony. This lizard seems to be almost transparent, and is small, and slow in its movements. Very little pressure will suffice to crush it, when a whitish liquid exudes from the body.* Mr. Boyle also gives a very graphic account of the tuboba and its surroundings: "Then suddenly a shout and a scuffle. Amidst cries of 'Tuboba! tuboba! señor!' we hurry to the spot; and there, in a scene of wild confusion, we make our first acquaintance with that great snake, the terror of Central America, the beautiful black and brown 'tuboba.' *He* is not likely to wriggle away or try to hide himself. Knowing his deadly power he stands steadily before us; his glassy eye looks straight in front; he does not deign to glance aside, though our every movement is marked. The long coils of his body, so soft and satiny, are quivering on the spring. His throat swells with rage and venom, and his head begins to sway with an almost imperceptible motion. For a moment we admire the graceful curve of that raised neck, and then the poor tuboba lies struggling upon the ground with a bullet through his skull. But the insects and creeping things we unhoused,† how odd they were. Great spiders with basilisk eyes, which

* "A Ride Across a Continent." By F. Boyle.
† From the wood-piles along the San Juan.

darted about in a strange zigzag course; hairy beetles and flat cockroaches, which took to their wings and flew; flat soppy insects of hideously uncertain shape, which rolled about under foot; shiny black crickets, with long inquisitive horns, which leaped into the air, and struck us in the face. But there were others also. Living jewels flashed about the displaced wood: lovely little frogs, that seemed made of scarlet sealing-wax, scrambled about our feet and looked up with eyes of emerald and topaz; big iguanas, with coats of shining green, scuttled over the grass, carrying their long tails high above their backs; flies of sapphire, with ruby wings, hung quivering in the sunbeams that pierced the tangled foliage. When the pale evening mists began to climb the steamer's sides, the last logs were thrown on board, and we rejoined our party."

We lay-to until the "pale evening mists" began to trail slowly off the Copan, and after the burning sun had sunk beyond the forest and a green gloom began to gather among the trees, we crossed the river and returned by the darkening paths to the hacienda. As we passed the ruins we turned to view them for the last time. We could faintly trace the outlines of the great wall in the dim light, and at its foot we could see the white foam thrown off by the quick-rushing river, which filled the air with its chafing against rocks and boulders. All beyond was swallowed up in foliage and in shadow. A thousand flickering gleams, which danced on uncertain courses, marked the flight of cocuyos and other noctilucous insects; the trees hung motionless in the still air; and over the whole scene there was a brooding mystery, which was due chiefly to the feelings drawn forth by the desolate and silent city lying buried beyond the river. From where we stood its monuments were invisible; but they rose before our minds, and we figured a far other scene, when,

unknown generations ago, the temples and other vast structures, the walls and dwellings of the great city, rose among their gardens, and the hum of teeming human life filled the air.

"Of the moral effect of the monuments themselves, standing, as they do, in the depths of a tropical forest, silent and solemn; strange in design, excellent in sculpture, rich in ornament, different from the works of any other people; their uses and purposes, their whole history so entirely unknown; with hieroglyphics explaining all, but perfectly unintelligible—we do not pretend to convey any idea. Often the imagination was pained in gazing at them. The tone which pervades the ruins is that of deep solemnity. An imaginative mind might be infected with superstitious feelings. From constantly calling them by that name in our intercourse with the Indians, we regarded these solemn memorials as 'idols,'—deified kings and heroes,—objects of adoration and ceremonial worship. We did not find on either the monuments or sculptured fragments any delineations of human, or, in fact, of any other kind of sacrifice, but had no doubt that the large sculptured stone invariably found before each 'idol' was employed as a sacrificial altar. The form of sculpture most frequently met with was a death's head—sometimes the principal ornament, and sometimes only accessory; whole rows of them on the outer wall adding gloom to the mystery of the place, keeping before the eyes of the living death and the grave, presenting the idea of a holy city—the Mecca or Jerusalem of an unknown people.

"In regard to the age of this desolate city we shall not at present offer any conjecture, although it can hardly be doubted that its history is graven on its monuments. No Champollion has yet brought to them the energies of his inquiring mind. Who shall read them?

'Chaos of ruins! who shall trace the void,
O'er the dim fragments cast a lunar light,
And say, "Here *was*, or *is*, where all was doubly night"?'

"In conclusion it may be remarked, that if this be the place referred to by the Spanish historian as conquered by Hernandez de Chaves, at that time its broken monuments, terraces, pyramidal structures, portals, walls, and sculptured figures were entire, and all were painted. The Spanish soldiers must have gazed at them with astonishment and wonder; and it seems strange that a European army could have entered it without spreading its fame through official reports of generals and exaggerated stories of soldiers—at least no European army could enter such a city now without this result following. But the silence of the Spaniards may be accounted for by the fact that those conquerors of America were illiterate and ignorant adventurers, eager in pursuit of gold and blind to everything else; or, if reports were made, the Spanish Government, with a jealous policy observed down to the last moment of her dominion, suppressed everything that might attract the attention of rival nations to her American possessions."

We looked our last upon the remnants of the great city, and as darkness was beginning to make dim the forest paths, we turned away and followed our guides. The gloom of the woods, and the solemn feelings which the deserted abodes of the ancient inhabitants of the place had evoked, made us unusually silent. We followed each other in Indian file along the narrow track, which in many parts rather resembled a tunnel hewn through some solid substance than a pathway through a forest, so thickly interlaced at either side and overhead were the tendrils of the various vines and parasites. These passages were nearly pitch dark, and as we felt our way along, it was trying to the nerves to hear the echoes answer-

ing the roars of a pair of jaguars that had started on their nocturnal hunt. We reached the hacienda, however, unmolested, but very much fatigued. We had visited the ruins which we had come so far to see; and toilsome as the journey had been, neither of us regretted having undertaken it. The images of those vast monuments of a vanished people will ever be fresh in my memory; and the feelings with which their first appearance inspired me have, after the lapse of years, lost none of their intensity. It was an episode in my existence the recollection of which will survive while life remains. This feeling has not been lessened by the subsequent sight of other and greater ruins. No doubt first impressions are strongest and take a firmer hold upon the imagination; and thus, while I cannot recall my visit to Copan without emotion, I look back almost unmoved upon the vast monuments of Palenque, although at the time these excited sentiments as absorbing and apparently as deep.

CHAPTER XIII.

LEAVE DON IGNACIO—ENCUENTROS—RUINS—LOS AMATES—IDOLS—ALTARS—THE CURA—CLIMATE—WILD RAVINE—THE MOTAGUA AGAIN—OLD CHURCH—THE LECHUZA—SNAKES—LIZARDS—SANTA ROSALIA—CHIMALAPA—LADRONES—ATTACKED BY ROBBERS—MISS OUR WAY—CROSS THE MOUNTAINS—GRAND VIEW—GUATEMALA—"WHO EVER GOES TO GUATEMALA?"—LEAVE GUATEMALA—TECPAN—RUINS—DIFFICULT PASS—LAKE OF ATITLAN—DUCK-SHOOTING—VOLCANOES—QUICHÉ—CONVENT—RUINS OF QUICHÉ.

THE next morning we took leave of our kind entertainer, whose hospitality contributed so materially to our enjoyment, and to whose kindness in furnishing us with men to clear away the jungle we owe whatever we know of the interesting relics of the great city. As we entered the forest (a different part of the same in which we had been lost a few evenings previously), we waved him our adieus; then a turn in the path hid him from our sight, and left him again to his solitude. He was a man of cultivated mind, and possessed much and varied knowledge. He had travelled in Europe, and was familiar with most of its capitals and with some of its celebrated men. Beautiful as was his place of exile from civilized life, I am at a loss to understand how he could have banished himself to such an out-of-the-way district, where society was unknown and where his only relaxation was the chase.

I must now beg the reader to fancy himself back again at Encuentros, a place where, as he will remember, we spent the second night after our arrival in the country. Here we learned by accident, and very greatly to our surprise, that

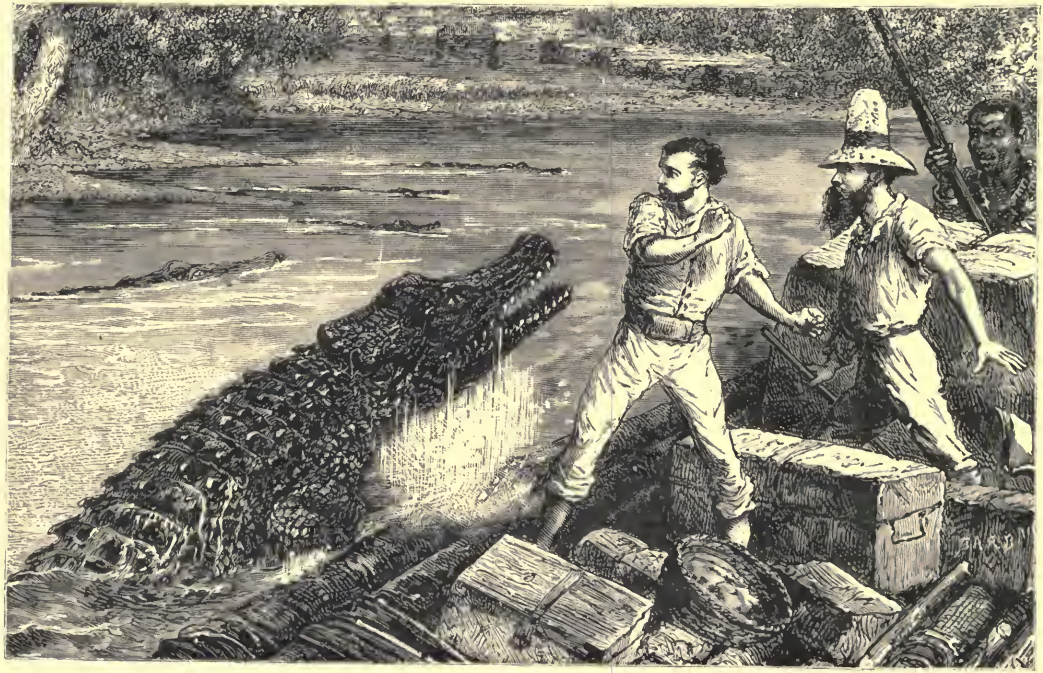
there were large ruins in the neighbourhood. We had heard nothing of them on the occasion of our previous visit to this place; indeed, even now that we knew of their existence and made inquiries respecting them, we could find no one able to give us information. At length we found a man who knew where they were and undertook to conduct us to them. We could plainly perceive that our curiosity with regard to these relics of past ages excited considerable suspicion in the dull minds of the inhabitants. Archæological zeal was, of course, an unknown quantity to them, and some interested motive, pecuniary or political, was ascribed to us. This may account for the apathy or more decided objection which was manifested to our explorations here as well as at Palenque. I have no doubt that we should have found a similar state of things at Copan had we not been fortunate enough to have the assistance of Don Ignacio de Sellas, who, being well known in the country and highly respected by the natives, disarmed suspicion by being himself our companion. It is hardly credible that we should have arrived at Encuentros in search of antiquities, respecting which we made many inquiries, and yet receive no hint of the presence of large and interesting ruins in that vicinity. Intense apathy or dull suspicion seems the alternative state of the Central American mind. It would be unjust to ascribe this character to the more educated classes; but of the lower class natives I fear it is hardly an exaggerated description. I have little doubt that the ruins near Encuentros were well known to every inhabitant of that place; yet our request for guides was met with a general confession of ignorance as to the direction in which they lay, varied by an occasional assertion that we had been deceived, and that they had no existence at all! However, as I have said, we at length met with a man who offered to conduct us.

He said that we should have to go down the river in a canoe, and that therefore we must leave our mules behind. With some misgiving as to the prudence of doing this we decided to run the risk, and took our places in a fine canoe belonging to our guide, twenty-five feet long and four feet broad, hollowed out of the trunk of a mahogany tree.

Upon the river we had some sport. There were numerous aquatic birds, a good many of which we bagged. We were told that in the lower reaches, towards the sea, alligators were plentiful. These monsters will attack bathers, or lie in wait at a spot near a village where women come to draw water, when they will make a sudden rush and sometimes succeed in seizing a victim. They have even been known to attack persons in boats or upon rafts. An instance of this kind came under my own observation. While descending the San Juan on a raft, in company with a naturalist in search of new species, without any warning, the water alongside our rough log-raft suddenly yawned, and through the spray uprose the hideous form of a great alligator! His gaping jaws were raised four feet above the water as he placed one of his fore arms among the logs of the raft, and fixed his cold cruel eye upon us. We were not a little startled by this hideous apparition. A negro attendant hit him a heavy blow on the snout with the steering-pole, when the monster subsided beneath the surface, leaving the river agitated by great waves on which our raft danced as if descending a rapid. We were so much taken by surprise that neither of us had time to use our weapons. The negro had more presence of mind than we; and had he not struck with his pole, I have no doubt that the alligator would have floundered on board, and possibly might have swamped our raft. We kept a sharp look-out for the reappearance of this audacious brute,

and we presently saw him rise to the surface, about fifty yards off, among others of his kindred. Here he bubbled and floated with just the outline of his back above water, and the ridge at the top of his head exposed, in which are placed the eyes. We both took a very careful aim at him, and at the report of our rifles the monster gave a flap with his tail that struck the water with a loud clap, and after a few violent struggles subsided quietly. The others disappeared.

In about two hours we reached Los Amates, a place not far from El Poso, which is situated on the main road from Ysabal to Guatemala. Los Amates is very picturesquely situated on the bank of the river of the same name, which here was about seventy yards broad, and in general from three to four feet deep. There were deep pools at intervals; but there were few stretches of more than one hundred yards where the river was not fordable on muleback. There were several places where the channel was broader than usual, and here the water was about two feet deep. We were told that a little lower down the depth was never less than three feet, so that vessels could reach that point by ascending the Motagua from the sea, provided they did not draw more than three feet. Some miles below Los Amates we entered a forest of splendid cedars and mahogany trees. The soil was moist and deep, and we sank over our ankles in the mud and decayed vegetable matter, which, added to the stifling heat, made this portion of the expedition anything but pleasant. Our guide, however, pushed on rapidly, and we struggled after him as best we could. In three quarters of an hour we suddenly found ourselves confronted by a pyramidal structure rising among the trees. It was like a glimpse of Copan. The sides were furnished with steps, perfect in several places, which enabled us to scramble



RAFT ATTACKED BY AN ALLIGATOR.

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to the summit, twenty-five feet high; and by other steps we descended on the opposite side. An enormous head attracted our attention at a little distance. It was nearly concealed beneath a vast tree, and was besides covered with moss. It was about six feet in diameter. Close to it was a large altar, almost hidden under moss and creepers. We diverged in several directions in search of more curiosities, and, at about three hundred yards to the north of the pyramid above mentioned, we came upon a number of vast monumental idols bearing a close similarity to those of Copan, but of much greater size. The first which we met with measured about twenty feet in height, and five feet and a half broad on two of its sides, and two feet eight inches on the others. In front we discerned the figure of a man in fair preservation; and on the reverse side was sculptured what seemed to be the figure of a woman, but this was so defaced that it was difficult to make it out. Up the sides were hieroglyphics, which were in excellent preservation, although cut in low relief; and these were, as far as we were able to judge, exactly similar to the inscriptions at Copan.

Another great idol rises to the height of twenty-three feet out of the ground, and has representations of men in the front and back; and, like the preceding one, has hieroglyphics cut in low relief on the sides.

Not many yards distant is another tall obelisk, twenty-six feet high. This is the most curious relic at this place. It has become deflected from the perpendicular so far that its summit overhangs its base by more than twelve feet; and it is prevented from falling partly by the depth to which it penetrates the earth, and partly by a large tree that has opportunely grown against it in such a manner as to form a support. On the side which overhangs the ground is carved

the figure of a man, which time has hardly injured. It is singularly perfect, and its execution is remarkably good. The opposite side seemed to bear a similar representation; but this was so covered with moss and other vegetable matter that we could not observe accurately. The remaining sides, as in the other cases, bore tablets of hieroglyphics. Near by lies a large statue, about ten feet in length, but completely covered with creepers; and another, of similar description, lies on its back, its stony eyes fixed in an eternal stare upon the heavens overhead.

Besides these there are four others of lesser size, but much broken and worn by time and weather; and among them were altars overgrown by vegetation, which concealed their exact form and dimensions. One of these, we remarked, was placed upon a little mound or hillock, and was surrounded by a low wall of stones. In the middle of this circular space, at the bottom of a hollow to which access is had by descending very narrow steps, is a great round block of stone ornamented with hieroglyphical inscriptions, and resting on what we conjectured to be two immense heads.

This whole neighbourhood was clearly at some remote period the site of a great city of pretty much the same type as Copan, but, I should think, of considerably less extent. The remains are of an inferior description to those at Copan; the sculpture is not so rich, and is much more defaced, owing perhaps to much greater antiquity. The ruins at Quirigua form a mystery which will probably never be unravelled. This city was most likely inhabited by people of the same race as that which built Copan. "For centuries it has lain as completely buried as if covered with the lava of Vesuvius. Every traveller from Ysabal to Guatemala has passed within three hours of it—we ourselves had done the same; and yet there it lay, like the rock-built city of Edom, unvisited,

unsought, and utterly unknown."* We wandered about in the sweltering jungle for a considerable time, frequently coming upon a monument, a building, a crumbling wall, an idol, or an altar, all speaking with mute eloquence of a people passed away and utterly forgotten. I cannot hope to transfuse into my readers the sensations awakened by the sight of these ruins. However accurate and vivid might be the description, it would lack the elements which render an actual visit so impressive. To inspect the remains of the ancient abodes of our race, the history of which we know, and with the causes which led to their destruction and abandonment we are familiar, is productive of deep and solemn feeling. But when we come upon memorials of a vanished people, once civilized and powerful, as we know from their works, but of whom no other traces remain, and to whose history we possess no key—their temples and their altars, the gods in whom they trusted, and their dwellings, alike overthrown and buried for unknown years in forest and jungle—we feel our souls stirred by new and strange emotions. Dull indeed must he be who can behold these monuments unmoved, or whose feelings are proof against their pathos!

We returned to Encuentros, and our first thought was to see if our mules were all right. We found a crowd of loiterers hanging round the shed where we had left them, listening to our guides' account of our strange behaviour in searching for old buildings and idols at Copan. Opinion seemed to be divided with regard to our sanity, but every one agreed that our conduct was very strange and suspicious. Finding the mules and our baggage all right, we visited the cura in order to obtain his aid in getting lodgings for the night. We were very kindly received, and on hearing the

* "Travels in Central America." By J. L. Stephens.

nature of our business, the good padre gave us a very warm invitation to his own house. During our sojourn in the country we had many opportunities of observing the daily duties which fall to the lot of the clergy. In addition to performing all the services of the Church, visiting the sick and performing the last offices at the graves of his parishioners, the cura is looked upon by every one, young and old, among his flock, as a father to be venerated, a friend to be loved, and a counsellor whose advice is ever open to all that seek it. "The door of the convent was always open, and Indians were constantly resorting to him: a man who had quarrelled with his neighbour; a wife who had been badly treated by her husband; a father whose son had been carried off as a soldier; a young girl deserted by her lover; all who were in trouble or affliction, came to him for advice and consolation, and none went away without it." Such is the character given by Mr. Stephens of the hard-working Central American cura.

We retired to rest early, being much fatigued by the labours of the day. We were called by our host at an early hour on the following morning, and we rose at once in order to start on our journey to Guatemala. Our curiosity on the subject of ruins had been rather stimulated than satisfied by an inspection of Copan and Quirigua, and we now determined to push on to Palenque, visiting *en route* whatever similar remains the time at our command would enable us to see.

I have not space sufficient to give the details of our journey from Encuentros to Guatemala. We had our moments of pleasure and our periods of fatigue and discomfort, which are inseparable from every human undertaking, but which we had now begun to regard as too commonplace to excite particular attention. We crossed the plain which lies between Encuentros and the mountain of Quesaltepeque; which

with its thick woods and deep miry paths reminded us unpleasantly of our never-to-be-forgotten ride over the Mico mountain, when, as the reader will remember, we were first introduced to the difficulties of Central American travel.

There is one matter to which I have perhaps omitted to give due prominence in this narrative; that is, the climate of these regions. The innumerable mountain chains, as well as the proximity of two oceans, necessarily induce a great rainfall; and although at the season of our visit the weather was unusually dry, there were many days on which we had tremendous rains. This great moisture acted upon in the stifling forests by the hot atmosphere renders fever prevalent in some districts. By our great precautions we escaped this danger during the whole time we were in the country. We carefully avoided camping on low grounds or near stagnant water; and if we got wet, we put on dry clothes as soon as possible. We were also particular as to what water we drank, using a little brandy as a corrective when occasion required; and of course we were provided with some quinine. These precautions were only needful in exceptional localities.

As we ascended Quesaltepeque thick black clouds were descending from its summit, and reeked in and out of the gorges and among the trees like the smoke of a factory. Soon heavy rain began to fall. It came down all at once, just as if it had been held aloft in some receptacle the bottom of which had suddenly fallen out! The path ran like a mill-race, and our mules plunged and waded through the deep slush, ever straining upwards, often slipping and staggering from side to side, and now and then fairly sticking in the yawning depths of the coffee-coloured mud. Our motto was "Excelsior," and we presented no bad image of heroes pressing towards their goal through bad repute and good repute

and all the difficulties and obstacles usually lying in the path of duty.

From the summit we beheld the plain of Esquipulas, bounded in the distance by a high range of pine-clad mountains. A transitory gleam of sunshine lighted up the vast prospect, banishing in a moment the deep gloom of the clouds. But it slowly faded out, leaving the shadows apparently deeper than it found them. It was like an April day at home—alternate sunshine and showers. But the sun was twice as hot, and the rain very much heavier, than the vernal sun or showers of Britain. In a passing gleam, a sheaf of beams fell upon and lighted up the gray walls of the great church of Esquipulas, pointing, like the finger of Heaven, to this monument raised by the piety of the natives of past days. We passed through the village without halting, very much to the discontent of our guides, who grumbled loudly at our want of consideration. Crossing a beautiful stream overhung by palms, whose nodding crests were reflected in the crystal water, we pushed up the opposite bank through a wild ravine, where jutting rocks gave a stern air to the scene, softened by the ever-present luxuriance of tropical vegetation. We passed close by the brink of a deep precipice, on a projecting ledge of rock of natural formation; and at one part, where this ceased, it had to be supplemented by an embankment built from the bottom. On the inside of the narrow track rose a wall of rock as perpendicular as the side of a house. At the bottom of the precipice rushed the stream, lately beautiful and peaceful, but here a torrent dashing furiously from boulder to boulder, and wheeling in mad eddies around the flanks of the rocks. Its hoarse thunder reverberated among the cliffs, and by no means tended to steady the nerves. We shortly descended to its bed by a broken and very difficult track,

and climbed up the opposite side of the gorge, which soon terminated, both cliffs approaching and merging together. At this point was situated a small farm-house, and nothing wilder or more picturesque than its situation can be well imagined. On one side the view extended down the rough precipitous ravine I have described, and on the other lay a pleasant valley, fertile and pleasantly varied with wood and meadow.

Late in the afternoon we entered the village of San Jacinto, where, as at Encuentros, we became the guests of the good padre.

The next morning Will and I rose early. Indeed, neither of us had much wish to lie abed longer than darkness continued, for the heat and mosquitoes rendered it well-nigh impossible to sleep. We went down to the Motagua and enjoyed a most invigorating bath in a sequestered pool—calm as a mirror, and reflecting on its peaceful surface the dappled sky and rich vegetation which lined the banks. A large heron, something like the Jabiru crane, stood at the opposite side up to his knees in the water. Will, who had his rifle, "got the dead drop" on the graceful bird; and with the report it collapsed and floated a wreck upon the water. Several other birds shared the same fate; but as they were all shot across the river, we did not feel disposed to take the trouble to retrieve any of them. We were fortunate, however, in securing a specimen of the splendid *Re de zopilotes*, or king vulture, a most magnificent bird. I had never previously examined one of these great raptorials, and evil-smelling though he was, I could not help admiring the wonderful beauty of his appearance. Strange that so exquisite a garb should conceal a carcass of such horror!

On returning to the village we found that the padre had not been idle during our absence. On the table was an

appetizing repast of chocolate, sweet-bread, sausages, corn-bread, honey, and, *mirabile dictu*, Cork butter! I have heard that at a state banquet given to a certain traveller the King of Dahomey once produced some Cork butter; but I never expected to find it on the table of the cura of San Jacinto. Truth compels me to say that its travels had not improved its quality, though what that had been at the time of its inspection in the market I was unable to conjecture.

After breakfast we set out, very much refreshed and bearing away very pleasant recollections of the hospitality we had received from our kind entertainer.

During this day's journey we enjoyed the novelty of travelling along a level road for a considerable distance. It was bordered on both sides by cultivated lands, which were evidently extremely fertile and productive. At one point, not far from Chiquimula, we passed the spot at which we had turned off to follow the difficult route that leads to Copan. In a solitary, uneventful existence, a long stretch of time, for the want of incidents to measure it off like mile-stones into periods, appears comparatively short. When many stirring or at least interesting occurrences take place within a limited period, their effect is to give rise to an impression that an indefinitely extended time has elapsed. It was thus with us. The sight of this track recalled to my mind that barely a month had passed since we travelled over it on our way to view the great ruins, and I could hardly believe that all the incidents which had taken place had been crowded into that short interval. Shortly after, we passed the old ruined church which I have already mentioned, and entered the town of Chiquimula, which now seemed to us quite a centre of civilization after our sojourn among the forests. It has a good plaza, adorned with a very handsome fountain, overshadowed by a picturesque group of palms.

We spent the night here, and started at a very early hour the next morning. Our route led us past the old church, and in the gray twilight its great size seemed even greater. The interior was black as a cavern; and from the darkness came the startling cry of the *lechuza*, a maniacal gurgling scream, which might easily be supposed to be the death-cry of the victim of some assassin instead of being the scream of the great Mexican owl. This creature preys upon squirrels, rabbits, and other small animals and birds. In the solitude of the great woods it almost takes one's breath away to hear this wild, weird cry pealing through the dismal vistas when Night is shrouding objects with her sombre veil, confusing their outlines, and often simulating with very innocent materials many a strange form. The traveller hardly knows by what creatures he is surrounded; and the creations of his fancy, as well as those vague figures I have alluded to, seem to become instinct with life as the hideous and thrilling screams of the lechuza ring through the woods.

Passing by a small stagnant pool with marshy edges and surrounded by trees, where the tall sedge and many lovely plants rioted in a rank luxuriance, we heard the loud, clear, metallic tones of the bell frog; which, however, dwells upon trees and not in the water. From this peculiarity it is sometimes known as the "green tree frog."

The tree toad is another creature that swells the chorus of reptile and insect life. Its cry resembles the syllables "ll-l-l-uk," and, according to the natives, is most frequently repeated before rain. There is another very minute specimen of the *hylæ*, sometimes known in the southern parts of the Union as the "savanna cricket," which with its tiny trilling cry tries to rival the louder notes of its great kindred. While passing under some low-hanging branches, the guides cautioned Will and me, who followed each other in single

file, to avoid a thick liana that was looped around them. Just as I ducked under it, to my horror and amazement it slid along the branches and disappeared! What we had taken for the twining stem of a liana was in fact a great snake, most likely a macaurel, which lay loosely coiled among the branches. This reptile reaches a great size, and bears considerable resemblance to the boa both in its colour and general habits. It is a tree-climber, whither it resorts in pursuit of monkeys, birds, or other creatures. There are many kinds of snakes in Central America, among which may be mentioned the *culebra tigre* or tiger-snake; so called from its markings, which resemble those of the *tigre* or jaguar. When about to strike, this reptile coils itself and elevates its head to a height of several feet from the ground. We killed a tiger-snake in the woods by the Motagua which measured eleven feet long, and we were told of others that had been seen in that neighbourhood twelve feet or more in length. Another venomous snake, the cascabel, is common in some parts. This snake is said to be identical with the rattlesnake. Perhaps the most deadly of the serpent tribe, however, is the "beautiful" coral snake. There is said to be an antidote to its bite, the *mikania guaco*, or guaco plant, the juice of which is supposed to be efficacious in allaying the dangerous symptoms, which otherwise would speedily end in death.

As the sun rose we saw the familiar forms of various species of lizards warming themselves in his beams. Among the most curious of these creatures may be mentioned the so-called "basilisk," to which our credulous ancestors ascribed the terrible power of inflicting death by its glance. This lizard measures about five inches in length; it lives almost entirely upon insects, and being semi-aquatic in its habits, is found by the banks of streams. The natives relish

its flesh, which they assert is as palatable as that of the great iguana. This last is the largest of its kind. It often measures upwards of three feet in length. It is furnished with a singular serrated ridge or crest, which reaches from the top of the head, along the back, to a point about midway in the tail. Beneath its throat will be found a loose fold of skin, which hangs from the jaw to the breast, to which it is attached. The colour of the iguana seems to vary with the sex. The males are in general a dull green, while the females have frequently been observed of a much lighter hue. It is propagated from eggs, which, after the fashion of the South American turtles, are laid in holes in the sand or soil by the margins of streams, often to the number of thirty or forty in a single nest. These eggs are esteemed a great delicacy by the natives, and are eagerly sought after. The flesh of this giant lizard is white, and much resembles chicken. Those who overcome their first repugnance to it become very fond of it, and it really is very good eating.

When pursued, the iguana takes refuge in trees, among which it is quite at home. It has been known, however, when hard pressed, to plunge into rivers or other water, where it disappears most mysteriously. Being gifted with the faculty of retaining its breath for a considerable time, it is enabled to remain under water without reappearing, and thus many escape.

We saw several of these interesting but rather repulsive-looking reptiles on our way from Chiquimula over the sierra to the Motagua; and our guides secured one of them with a lasso or noosed rope, when he jerked it to the ground and killed it with his machete. We tasted its flesh, and although somewhat prejudiced, we found it tender and much like chicken in flavour and appearance.

Towards evening we arrived at the village of Santa Rosalia, which is situated at a bend of the river where the bank projects into the stream. Although its situation is eminently beautiful both in itself and in its surroundings, the village was a poor affair, consisting merely of a few thatched huts. It sufficed, however, for our purposes. We got accommodation for ourselves and our mules, and what more did we want?

The next day we passed along a level road, having the Motagua, which we regarded as an old friend, on our right, and the mountains of Vera Paz culminating the landscape against the sky. We halted at a small village, Fisioli, at midday, to refresh both ourselves and our animals, as our ride had been long and the day was excessively hot and oppressive. When the heat is accompanied by great moisture in the air, it becomes almost unbearable. One's spine becomes a mere piece of india-rubber, incapable of upholding the body, and any exertion is almost impossible. On days when there is a *dry* heat, these distressing sensations are not nearly so marked. About five o'clock in the evening we reached a kind of table-land covered with what at first sight I took to be vast orchards of apple trees in full blossom. These trees I was unable to identify. They were loaded with beautiful flowers, and among them grew giant tunos or cacti with great candelabra-like arms fifteen to twenty feet in length.

It was beginning to get dark as we reached Chimalapa, and here we put up at the *Cabildo*, a species of town hall which is availed of as a caravansary by travellers. This was a spacious building, well plastered and white-washed, which gave it a clean and cool appearance, very refreshing to tired and half-baked wayfarers like us.

The next day, as was our custom, we started at a very

early hour. The morning's ride was always pleasant, the air was cool, and the effects of the gradual illumining of the landscape by the rising sun were always beautiful, and often almost sublime, especially among the mountains. Sombre peaks gradually caught the glow, becoming flushed and rose-hued. Floating mists, which often filled the valleys, became tinged with gorgeous colour and slowly dispersed; and above, the heavens offered every variety of cloud, varying in size, shape, and colour, from minute to minute.

On the next day we had an adventure which broke in upon the monotony of our travels. After leaving Guastatoya we saw several figures ahead of us on the road. No sooner did they perceive us following them than they separated, some going to one side of the road and the remainder to the other side. We thought this manœuvre rather suspicious, and both of us got our rifles ready in case their services might be required. On arriving within a few yards of the men, they came out of the bushes at both sides of the road simultaneously, and ordered us to halt. They looked very truculent ruffians; and all of them, I have no doubt, would be condemned in any court in Christendom from their evil looks alone.

They all carried machetes bare in their hands; and one fellow, who seemed their leader, had in addition an old horse-pistol, which he presented at me. I happened to be in front, and being thus peremptorily summoned to halt, and not being anxious to shed blood, I did so. No doubt these fellows had grown bold from the impunity with which they had attacked and robbed their own countrymen; and probably they were under the delusion that we would give in, notwithstanding that we were armed, as easily as their accustomed victims. While I was parleying with the leader, who demanded with the most horrible oaths and threats that

we should instantly throw down our arms and hand over whatever money or other valuables we possessed, Will, who was close behind, fired at the ruffian and shot him dead on the spot. One of the gang rushed at me with his machete raised, but was met with a ball in the heart that stretched him out on his face without a groan or the least motion. The others dived through the chapparal like jungle cocks and disappeared. We left the robbers where they fell, and on looking back from a little distance, we saw that with the extraordinary instinct of their species, several zopilotes were already congregating to the banquet. Had we returned a few hours later, we should have found nothing of the robbers except their well-polished bones. There are many species of insects that act the part of Nature's scavengers as well as the vultures; and these in a very short time divest of every particle of flesh any animal that finally succumbs to the bullet of the hunter, or that dies a natural death in the woods. It excites strange feelings thus to see how quickly and with what ease proud, conceited man, is removed from the sphere of his hopes and of his actions, whether good or evil. A few bones mark for a little time the place where he fell; but these too disappear, and there remains no trace of that being for whom the world itself was hardly large enough so lately.

We feared that this incident would get us into trouble. But luckily the robbers, who were a notorious gang, were afraid to venture within reach of the law in order to have the matter investigated. Although we had acted in self-defence we would have been by no means certain to be exempt from considerable annoyance if the ruffians had notified the occurrence to the alcalde of Guastatoya. We said nothing about it, of course, and our guides preserved a discreet silence.

As we advanced, the country became better cultivated, the

road being bordered by fields separated from each other by hedges; and here and there we observed a hacienda, generally placed in a commanding and picturesque situation. This cultivated tract, however, soon gave place to a rugged ravine, so wild and apparently so unfrequented that I began to think we must have missed our way and wandered off the road to the city of Guatemala.

This proved to be the case; and after a good deal of trouble and delay we again got upon the right track, and at nightfall arrived at a farm-house, where we were kindly lodged by the proprietor, who informed us that we had arrived within a day's journey of the city.

On continuing our journey the next day, the road soon began to ascend the steep and rugged sides of a mountain, from which the eye took in a vast extent of country, all apparently as wild and uninhabited as it may have been three hundred years ago. When we gained the summit, we beheld below us a magnificent amphitheatre formed by great mountain ranges enclosing a vast hollow; and here we discerned a small white speck, which our guides told us was the village of El Puente. Descending the mountain we gained the valley at its foot; and here the road passed over a deep, wild ravine, by a stone arch which spanned the dashing waters of a brook. On the other side of the valley we commenced to ascend the ridge that enclosed it in that direction; and from this the view was extraordinarily grand and impressive. Behind lay the valley we had crossed, the trees and village of El Puente dwarfed by distance, and surrounded by a great ridge of mountains five thousand feet in height, their sides here and there glistening with waterfalls, embellished with forests, or exhibiting patches of pasture that shone in the bright sunlight with the sheen of emeralds. We continued along the lofty ridge which divides the valley

at one side from that at the other; and as we advanced, some new object or some new point of view constantly arrested our attention or excited our admiration. Passing through a wood of pines, which showed the great elevation of our position, we descended the range, and in an hour gained a large cattle estate, or *hacienda de ganados*, where we saw many hundreds of fine cattle, large, "loose-boned," long-horned animals, roaming over the fine pastures on the lower slopes of the mountain. We noticed that a fine young bull was much marked about the shoulders and back with deep scars and gashes; and on questioning a vaquero the man told us that these injuries had been inflicted by a jaguar that had leaped upon the animal from a rocky ledge near a spring upon the mountain side. The powerful beast in his first spring dealt the bull a blow that knocked it down; and while lying thus at his mercy, he would no doubt have made short work of it had it not been for the opportune aid given by another bull, which charged the jaguar as he squatted on the body of his victim, and rolled him over and over. The wounded bull then rose and assisted his bold brother, and between them they put the great cat to flight. The oddest thing was that this adventure had caused a bond of union to spring up between the animals, which constantly grazed side by side or lay close to each other upon the grass, although before the incident no such good feeling existed between them. The wounds were very deep and were still angry-looking notwithstanding that they were attended to every day by the vaquero, and dressed with some composition to keep off the flies and to promote healing.

After crossing a broad ravine, we at last beheld ourselves at the gates of Guatemala. But where was the city? We entered and advanced between rows of wretched huts, in front of which lounged their occupants, mostly lower class

"greasers" and half-drunken Indians and soldiers. Fires were lighted on the road, and at these, great pieces of meat were being roasted for the soldiers, a large number of whom were then in the city. They certainly looked vile ruffians, their scowling, besotted faces, bearing plainly the impress of the free indulgence of every low passion. Their "uniform" was a matter of individual taste or the result of accident. All had large straw hats, through which appeared in many instances the shock hair of the wearers. Their arms were old flint-lock muskets, with here and there a percussion lock; and to these were fixed bayonets, which I should say had never been cleaned, or perhaps had not even been unfixed, since first put on.

A more ruffianly rabble it would be hard to find, or even to imagine. As these fellows were capable of any atrocity, we were very careful to keep clear of them; and after passing them we found ourselves at the foot of a long straight street which seemed to lead away into the city. We searched in vain for a long time before we could find anything in the shape of a hotel. Even an inquiry for such an accommodation seemed to excite both astonishment and amusement. I do not know whether Guatemala boasts of hotels at the present day; but, incredible as it may appear, this state capital was utterly ignorant of their necessity at this time. When Mr. Stephens visited Guatemala his inquiries for hotels excited some ridicule. "What's the use of a hotel in Guatemala? Who ever goes to Guatemala?" was the answer he received from a gentleman to whom he applied for information.

At length—strange that success so rarely favours any one at first—we got sumptuous lodgings in a house taken care of for the owners by a mulatto who had held a command in former years in General Carrera's army. It was the first

time we had even seen a bed since leaving Don Ignacio de Sellas's hospitable house at Copan, and it may therefore be readily supposed that when we were each accommodated with a luxurious mattress on an ebony and gold four-poster, over which was hung crimson netting, we slept the sleep of the just. The height of luxury was reached when we were shown to a spacious bath-room. The water, however, was supplied in buckets to the cistern; but there was plenty of it, and we were prodigal in our ablutions. Probably never before had so much water been used in that house. But we could not reconcile the existence of a bath-room in Guatemala with the absence of a hotel. It was unintelligible why there should have been civilization enough in the place to produce the one and not to produce the other. Speaking of this city, which now contains a population of about fifty thousand, Mr. Stephens says: "Situated in the Tierras templadas, or temperate regions, on a table-land five thousand feet above the sea, the climate of Guatemala is that of perpetual spring, and the general aspect reminded me of the best class of Italian cities. It is laid out in blocks of from three to four hundred feet square, the streets parallel and crossing each other at right angles. The houses, made to resist the action of earthquakes, are of only one story, but very spacious, with large doors and windows protected by iron balconies. In the centre of the city stands the Plaza, a square of one hundred and fifty yards on each side, paved with stone, with a colonnade on three sides. On one of these stands the old Viceregal Palace and Hall of the Audiencia; on another are the Cabildo and other city buildings; on the third the Custom-House and Palace of the *ci-devant* marquisate of Aycinena; and on the fourth side is the Cathedral, a beautiful edifice in the best style of modern architecture, with the Archiepiscopal Palace on one side and the Colegio de los

Infantes on the other. In the centre is a large stone fountain of imposing workmanship, supplied with pipes from the mountains about two leagues distant; and the area is used as a market-place. The churches and convents correspond with the beauty of the Plaza, and their costliness and grandeur would attract the attention of tourists in Italy or old Spain.

"The foundation of the city was laid in 1776, a year memorable in our own annals" (Mr. Stephens was an American), "and when our ancestors thought but little of the trouble of their neighbours. At that time the old capital, twenty-five miles distant, shattered and destroyed by earthquakes, was abandoned by its inhabitants, and the present was built in the rich valley of Las Vaccas in a style commensurate with the dignity of a captain-generalship of Spain. I have seldom been more favourably impressed with the first appearance of any city, and the only thing that pained me in a two hours' stroll through the streets was the sight of Carrera's ragged and insolent-looking soldiers; and my first idea was that in any city in Europe or the United States the citizens, instead of submitting to be lorded over by such barbarians, would rise *en masse* and pitch them out of the gates."

Some of the houses in Guatemala are constructed in a very agreeable manner. That in which we put up, having been built some ten or fifteen years previously to our visit for a rich citizen, is worth describing. It formed a square, one side fronting the street, from which access was gained to a large court-yard in the interior by a covered passage, in which was the porter's lodge. This passage was paved with lozenges of black and white marble. The patio or court-yard was similarly paved round all its sides, the centre being occupied by a small garden filled with beautiful subtropical plants and parterres of flowers, bending beneath the silver showers

plentifully sprinkled over them by a fountain which threw the water outwards from small pipes arranged circularly. The windows of the various rooms looked out on this square from under the shelter of a deep portico which was supported on columns; and as this was roofed, it afforded in the evenings a very pleasant promenade all round the patio, while during the heat of the day this advantage was also available beneath its shade. Near the outer entrance from the street was a large sala or reception-room with a handsome window opening on a balcony overhanging the street; and next to this were several other spacious apartments, rather scantily furnished according to English ideas; but this was compensated for by polished floors inlaid in pretty patterns with different-coloured woods, and handsome projecting cornices, which were supported by light Corinthian columns. This colonnade round the rooms had a novel and pleasing effect, and the pillars being reflected in the polished surface of the floors, gave the rooms a wonderfully glittering, mirror-like appearance. At one end of the comedor or dining-room a door gave access to a large, airy bed-room, with a highly polished floor and lighted by two windows which reached quite to the cornice from the floor. Outside, these windows were connected by a broad balcony roofed over, and ornamented with statues and caryatides holding lamps. Large vases filled with pretty flowering shrubs formed an agreeable screen along the outer side of the balcony. In fact this house was altogether a good specimen of the dwellings of the better classes in Guatemala. The mulatto officer, we learned, was merely in charge of the house during the absence of its owners, who had gone to Zonzonate. In the meantime he was glad to make hay while the sun shone; that is, to pocket whatever he could by letting lodgings in the house.

We left Guatemala with regret. It was bright and

tolerably clean, and we longed to lounge away a week or two there, to rest after our travels. But unluckily we had not time, and however reluctant we were to go, we had to start on the morning following our arrival. We did not wish to give up visiting Palenque, and that would consume the greater portion of the time which we had at our disposal. So *malgré nous* "boot and saddle" was our cry at dawn. Passing successively Mixco and Guatemala Antigua, we reached Patsum on the third day. This is a large Indian village situated on the high-road to Mexico, in the midst of a country of varied beauty, in some parts well cultivated and in others wild and desolate. At this place we turned off by a narrow track, and proceeded across a vast plateau five or six thousand feet above sea level. At this great elevation the air was cool and exhilarating, and we trotted briskly along, admiring the splendid prospects that frequently opened as we advanced.

We noticed two considerable hillocks or mounds on the right of the road, similar to those in the valley of the Mississippi, and these were without doubt relics of the ancient inhabitants of the country. At this point the road ran by the brink of a great cleft or barranca, which yawned alongside in unpleasant proximity. The plain ran up to the very lip of the chasm perfectly level, and an uglier place to come upon in the dark it would be hard to conceive. Without warning of any kind, a single step would take the traveller from level ground over the verge of a precipice between two and three thousand feet in depth! Looking down from the dizzy height of this great precipice, the woods below were reduced to the semblance of shrubs—it was, in fact, like looking upon a brake of gorse, although we knew that the trees so far beneath were eighty to one hundred feet in height. During the day we passed by another of these

tremendous barrancas, and shortly after we reached the small village of Tecpan Guatemala, having traversed a road bordered by magnificent trees intermingled with aloes thirty feet high and many beautiful flowering shrubs.

Tecpan consists of a long street of huts terminating in a spacious plaza, where are the chief buildings. The inhabitants are mostly Indians. Near the plaza is the church, which boasts the distinction of being the second built in the country since the Conquest. It is probably one of the finest in Guatemala, having a façade of two hundred feet; and besides being very lofty, it is richly ornamented with stuccos and figures of saints, and has several spires and turrets. It gives the traveller a feeling of amazement to come upon such splendid religious structures in a country apparently retrograding to a condition bordering upon barbarism. The ancestors of the present races inhabiting Central America, both red and white, must have been vastly superior to their descendants. The energies of the present inhabitants seem to be concentrated upon turbulence and anarchy. Interminable revolutions destroy the trade and prosperity of the country, and whatever intelligence or industry exists is paralyzed. Scarce a year passes without seeing a bloody revolution in one or other of the Central American States. At the very time I write, the newspapers announce the burning and sacking of Colon, which have been accompanied by the most horrible cruelties on the inhabitants, two hundred of whom are stated to have been burnt alive in the calaboose.

Near Tecpan are some interesting ruins. In describing the old city, Fuentes says: "To the westward of the city there is a little mount that commands it, on which stands a small round building about six feet in height, in the middle of which there is a pedestal formed of a shining substance resembling glass, but the precise quality of which has not

been ascertained. Seated around this building the judges heard and decided the causes brought before them, and their sentences were executed upon the spot. Previous to executing them, however, it was necessary to have them confirmed by the oracle; for which purpose three of the judges left their seats and proceeded to a deep ravine, where there was a place of worship containing a black transparent stone, on the surface of which the Deity was supposed to indicate the fate of the criminal. If the decision was approved, the sentence was executed immediately; if nothing appeared on the stone, the accused was set at liberty. This oracle was also consulted in the affairs of war." We got sight of this curious relic of superstition, which on examination proved to be nothing more worthy of veneration than a piece of common slate measuring about fourteen inches by ten, and of the thickness of a common house slate.

At about a mile and a half from Tecpan the track brought us to the brink of a dismal ravine, which opened to a great depth just beneath our feet. To descend it was not an easy task, but the guides brought us to a spot where the banks had broken away somewhat, thus affording a rugged and very steep passage to the bottom. The mules were reluctant to trust themselves upon the slippery path; but being pulled on in front and whipped up unmercifully behind, we got them over, and sliding and staggering, slipping and plunging, we finally got them to the bottom. At the other side of the ravine the guides led us by a narrow path along which only one mule could advance at a time. This was the passage that led to the old city. Along this we went in single file, and after some little time we mounted to a table-land, and on continuing over this for a mile or so we came upon the remains of the ancient Patinamit.

We dismounted, and leaving our guides to guard the mules

and packs, we proceeded to explore the ruins. All about the spot the ground was covered with traces of ancient buildings or with the grassy mounds which had grown over and concealed their fallen walls. Many of the walls had been thrown down by the Indians of Tecpan, who removed the stones to build that village. Enough remained, however, to gratify our curiosity. The foundations of one house measured one hundred feet in length, and were fifty broad. On exploring the site, we ascertained that it was encompassed on all sides by the deep ravine up which we had come, and so steep and precipitous is this that it can be scaled nowhere except just at the spot where we had ascended. We found the defaced and almost unrecognizable remains of two figures, the nature of which it was difficult to determine. They were about three feet in length. One of them seemed intended to represent an animal of some kind. This had been pulled out of its bed in the soil shortly before our visit, and lay upon the ground fully exposed. These shattered idols give rise to sadder feelings than the ruined habitations that surround them. It is natural that houses and other works of the human hand should have a period to their existence; but to behold the gods, once believed in and worshipped by a vanished people, lying broken and neglected amid the ruins of their temples, excites deeper feelings than mere pity or regret. It suggests a people now unknown and long forgotten, successful indeed in the things of this life while they existed, but who none the less have lived in vain. They lived in darkness, and died in it; and the great mystery of their fate on earth pales before the greater mystery of their eternal lot. Where once thronged busy crowds, there is now but a solitary hut. The vast outlook from the spot seems to compel the attention of the traveller to the contemplation of the memorials at his feet. Silence dwells about the place,

but fancy listens to the echoes of the past. Trees and bushes cover many of the remains, but offer little obstacle to their examination. It is said that on Good Friday each year the cura of Tecpan repairs hither at the head of a long procession of the villagers, to worship the true God amid the scenes of former idolatry; and on these occasions the Indians assert that they can hear the pealing of bells deep beneath the ground.

We made our camp among the trees of a grove near the ruins, where the solitary Indian, whose hut I have mentioned, had made a shed for his mule. We slung our hammocks to the posts, and our guides bestowed themselves wherever they thought best. The sole resident of the ruins paid us a visit, and while dozing in our hammocks his grave and melancholy voice sounded in our ears with the mournful cadence of the wind moaning through the crevices of the shattered dwellings of his forefathers. The moon presently rose and showered her silvery beams upon the foliage of the overhanging trees, throwing dense shadows upon the earth, and here and there lighting up a figure or a tree trunk. It was a mild night, and in the intervals when I lay awake I admired the trellis of branches stretched across the silver disc of the moon, or watched the swarthy figures of our guides in their *négligé* attitudes by the fire. Large bats flew about, and in the darkest shadows glimmered the tiny lanterns of the fire-flies.

The next day we returned along our tracks towards Patsum, which we passed on our left. Our road now lay along a high level table-land, through which wound a tremendous abyss three thousand feet in depth. We were not pleased to find that we had to descend this fearful ravine by a narrow winding track absolutely without a guard of any kind, where the slightest stumble on the part of either

ourselves or our mules would infallibly precipitate us to the bottom. At one point, where this dizzy track made a sudden turn round the flank of a precipitous cliff, the earth had been washed away, leaving a blank space of several feet, where the sheer descent was visible. It was not absolutely perpendicular, but the extreme steepness with which the side of the cliff sloped downwards was sufficiently terrible, and a fall here would serve every purpose of destruction. At this spot we had to exercise some ingenuity in order to get our mules over the breach. The track was so narrow that we could not turn them round in order to return. We therefore left one of the guides to remain by them, while we and the other guide went back to get some logs with which to make a bridge. We had a considerable distance to go before finding trees suitable for the purpose, and suffice it to say that after several weary journeys backwards and forwards we at last got together sufficient for the purpose. The logs were laid side by side across the chasm, which was about ten feet broad, and covered with stones and earth. This piece of engineering took five hours to accomplish, as the labour of cutting the logs with our machetes, which were light tools for such a task, and the distance which they had to be brought to the scene of operations, consumed about four hours. Laying them in their places and continuing the semblance of a path across them was easy, but not so was the work of enticing the mules to cross. After much persuasion, cajoling, and whipping had been employed in vain, we had recourse to an apparently cruel expedient. Collecting as much dry herbage and withered brush as we could find, we made a bonfire just behind the stubborn animals. As the flames crackled and flared high they at length relented, and after several uneasy demonstrations savouring of a desire to scramble round and attempt escape through the

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flames, they suddenly took heart of grace, and we at the same moment using our utmost capacities of pulling, shouting, and whipping, they charged the "bridge," and got safely over. The last mule displaced the logs in her frantic efforts to get past the dangerous spot, and one of her hind legs went through. However, she scrambled out on to the track at the other side and followed her comrades all trembling, her ears cocked at the terrific abyss that lay beneath alongside, and her legs feeling their way down gingerly. At the bottom of this tremendous gorge a stream ran impetuously, dashing over slopes of black rocks or thundering down from one ledge to another, filling the air with a hoarse roar that added to the impression of danger which the place was so well fitted to arouse.

In the afternoon we ascended the opposite bank of this ravine, and on the summit we observed traces of the fortifications erected there about the year 1838 by General Guzman, to command the precipitous ascent, in order to repel the invasion threatened by Carrera. This position, although apparently of impregnable strength, was surprised and taken by a body of Indians despatched against it by the latter. The fortifications were dismantled, the boundaries destroyed, and the place (Los Altos) was annexed to the state of Guatemala.

Towards nightfall we emerged upon the elevated plateau that surrounds the lake of Atitlan. This scene has been well described by Mr. Stephens:—"From a height of three thousand or four thousand feet we looked down upon a surface shining like a sheet of molten silver, enclosed by rocks and mountains of every form, some barren and some covered with verdure, rising from five hundred to five thousand feet in height. Opposite, down on the borders of the lake, and apparently inaccessible by land, was the town of Santiago de

Atitlan, to which our friend was wending his way, situated between two immense volcanoes eight thousand or ten thousand feet high. Farther on was another volcano, and farther still another more lofty than all, with its summit buried in clouds. There were no associations connected with this lake, until lately we did not know it even by name; but we both agreed that it was the most magnificent spectacle we ever saw. We stopped and watched the fleecy clouds of vapour rising from the bottom, moving up the mountains and the sides of the volcanoes. We descended at first by a steep pitch and then gently for about three miles along the precipitous border of the lake, leaving on our right the camino real and the village of San Andres, and suddenly reached the brink of the table-land, two thousand feet high. At the foot was a rich plain running down to the water; and on the opposite side another immense perpendicular mountain-side, rising to the same height with that on which we stood. In the middle of the plain, buried in foliage with the spire of the church barely visible, was the town of Panajachel. Our first view of the lake was the most beautiful we had ever seen, but this surpassed it. All the requisites of the grand and beautiful were there—gigantic mountains, a valley of poetic softness, lake and volcanoes; and from the height on which we stood, a waterfall marked a silver line down its sides. A party of Indian men and women were moving in single file from the foot of the mountain toward the village, and looked like children. The descent was steep and perpendicular, and on reaching the plain the view of the mountain-walls was sublime. As we advanced, the plain formed a triangle with its base on the lake; the two mountain ranges converged to a point and communicated by a narrow defile beyond with the village of San Andres."*

* "Travels in Central America."

When we passed these magnificent scenes, the failing light heightened their grandeur and impressiveness, but rendered their details too vague for observation. We had the aid of the moon as we journeyed across the plain; and as we approached the village the road passed beneath the sombre shadows of a forest where the air was heavy with the perfume of flowers. Here and there an opening admitted the light of the moon; and round the shadowy edges of the little clearings stood trees as covered with flowers as any which had excited our wonder and admiration since entering the country. In these spaces large vampires flew about; and wherever their pale gleams were not eclipsed by the brighter rays of the moon, hundreds of fire-flies glanced and glimmered. We put up in the village, but had to content ourselves with the bare accommodation of the cabildo. We slung our hammocks to pegs in the walls, and while watching the vague forms of the huge bats that darted in and out through the open door, I fell fast asleep. This had been the longest and most tiresome day's journey we yet had undertaken, and so fatigued were we that the sun was several hours above the horizon before his light awoke us. I doubt if his beams, bright as they were, would have so soon produced this effect, had they not been aided by the noise made by the villagers, who crowded about the cabildo, moved by curiosity as to who we were and whither we were going.

When they learned from our guides that we were going about inspecting the ruins of the old cities they thought us mad. No one in this country travels for curiosity or pleasure, and if we were acting in a manner unknown in the country, we must be mad. This seemed conclusive, and one by one the crowd of gapers dispersed, each satisfied with his own wisdom and laughing at our folly.

On rising we proceeded to the lake to bathe. It was not

easy to find a secluded nook, for the villagers, possibly expecting some fresh eccentricity, were disposed to keep us in view. However, we threw them off the track and had a most delightful bath in the deep cool waters, which plashed, as if in mimicry of the ocean, with a musical murmur against the rocky shores. Multitudes of ducks quacked and flew over the surface, and we enjoyed some sport with them. Will outdid his previous performances, and his great skill with the rifle secured the respect of such of the natives as were attracted to the spot by the sound of the firing. The birds were extraordinarily tame, having evidently been seldom disturbed. On inquiry we found that there was but a single gun in the village, and this had been out of order for six months past! Will's rifle soon had the surface of the lake dotted with dead and dying ducks; and when at these repeated hints the remainder took themselves off to safer quarters, the Indians launched canoes and vied with each other to retrieve the dead and wounded birds. Many amusing scenes took place, as a bird squattered and flew over the lake pursued by two canoes, each doing its utmost to secure it. Missiles would fly about the unlucky duck, which often dived and reappeared in some unexpected quarter, again to be pursued with the same result. Several of these ducks were shot by us from the shore just as the Indians were reaching forward to grasp them. The hiss and splash of the bullets in such close proximity not a little astonished those would-be retrievers.

Leaving San Andres and skirting the lake for some distance, the path soon commenced to ascend the mountains in a zigzag manner, at one moment giving us a view of the great lake, and again of the plain. This ascent was extremely difficult owing to the steepness of the path. In one place we had to clamber upwards over steps which had been

hewed in the mountain side. We should have enjoyed the splendid prospects which constantly were presented to us if we could have afforded leisure to attend to them. At one time we had exposed to our view six volcanoes, four of which are reputed to exceed ten thousand feet, and the other two, fifteen thousand feet in height. Below us at a vast depth lay the lake, its surface apparently as polished as a mirror, reflecting the giant forms of the hills upon the nearer shore, and stretching away towards the west, where a high chain of mountains bounded our vision at the distance of many miles. The rough, uneven track, several times passed close beneath thundering cascades that appeared to leap towards us from the sky itself, the deafening crash with which they fell into their profound basins rendering our voices inaudible, while showers of spray were scattered about and nourished luxuriant gardens of exquisite plants in every little nook where some soil had accumulated.

Our next stage was Solola, where we remained for the night; and the next day we pushed forward to examine the remains of Santa Cruz del Quiché. Descending into an immense ravine by a zigzag path, which was guarded at the most dangerous parts by high stone walls, we scrambled up the opposite side and reached the plain of Quiché, upon which we beheld the ruins of the ancient regal city, which in its day formed the capital of the kingdom of Utatlan. Our course led us between two pretty lakes of insignificant extent, and we soon arrived at the village, where we put up at the convent. The entrance was sufficiently strange. We halted at the foot of a lofty flight of stone steps and looked about, wondering where we were to go next. An Indian lad desired us to mount the steps; for which the practice we had had among the sierras now proved to have been a good training. We rode up, our mules striking fire from the

stones as they clambered along, and passed through a long corridor into a large square-flagged chamber, whence another great flight of steps led down into the court-yard of the convent, which was surrounded by high walls. This was the most extraordinary entrance to a stable-yard I had ever beheld; but it was the only mode of ingress or egress, and however incommodious, travellers have to put up with it.

This convent is said to have been the first founded in the country by friars of the Dominican order, and existed at the time when Alvarado waged his ruthless wars against the natives.

The place was now almost dismantled; the large chambers were either half ruinous or filled with lumber or rubbish: some were used as hay-sheds; from others we heard the familiar grunt of hogs, whose snouts were thrust inquiringly through apertures which time and their teeth had worn in the doors. It was a melancholy spectacle to see this fine building gradually falling to pieces; but ruin seems the lot of all things in Central America.

We got lodgings for ourselves in the cabildo; that is to say, we were at liberty to sling our hammocks against the walls. We did not like the appearance of the inhabitants of this place. They had a downward, scowling expression of face, which made anything but a pleasant impression. We were careful, therefore, to keep our arms near us; and slept "with one eye open," pretty much as we used to do on the plains or among the cañons of Arizona.

We may have misjudged the people, however, for day found us with throats intact. We lost no time in setting out for the ruins, guided by a sinister-looking native, a mestizo, who carried his machete as if for immediate use. We had not left the village many minutes when we found ourselves on the verge of one of those stupendous chasms so

often alluded to in these pages. This was about fifteen hundred feet deep; and our guide pointed out to us the place where many years before an unfortunate Indian, who was being pursued by the alguazils, or police of the village, threw himself headlong, to avoid falling into their hands! He was dashed to fragments against the rocks at the foot of the tremendous cliffs.

Shortly after this we came to what had evidently in ancient times formed the line of fortifications that guarded the city. Walls in every stage of ruin, here a few upright stones, there grass-and-weed-covered mounds, stretched away on either hand, and connected towers, the remains of which we could discern at intervals. The stones had been cut and placed with care; and among the shapeless masses of *débris* we noticed many arrow heads of flint. Passing over this outer line, we perceived before us a vast platform rising in terraces and culminating in a tower one hundred and twenty feet high. The steps connecting the terraces are in sufficiently good preservation, and clambering up we reached the summit, where we entered a square enclosure surrounded by stone walls plastered within with a very hard and smooth cement, which still in most places adhered to the walls with its original tenacity. The top of the tower is reached by a flight of stone steps.

Fuentes, who wrote the Chronicles of the Kingdom of Guatemala, gives the history of the kings of Quiché and Kachiquel, who, according to him, descended from the ancient Toltecs. But I forbear to inflict it upon the reader. It is enough to say that if a manuscript written by Don Juan Torres, grandson of the last sovereign of Quiché, speaks truly, the ancient Toltecs claimed descent from the house of Israel, who, after escaping from Pharaoh through the Red Sea, fell into idolatry. Finding that Moses disapproved of their

backsliding, they fled from him, and under the leadership of one Tanub they managed to cross from Asia to America, though in what manner is not stated. They set up their tents anew in Mexico, and from their great leader descended the kings of Tula and Quiché and of the Toltecs. The history of these ancient warriors is simply a record of bloody feuds and battles as uninteresting as the wars between the kites and the crows. That these kings ruled over rich and powerful countries is certain; the vast ruins they have left behind them attest it.

Mr. Stephens furnishes information relative to Quiché which he derived from the narrative of Fuentes. According to this historian the city "was surrounded by a deep ravine that formed a natural fosse, leaving only two very narrow roads as entrances, both of which were so well defended by the castle of Resguardo as to render it impregnable.

"The centre of the city was occupied by the royal palace, which was surrounded by the houses of the nobility; the extremities were inhabited by the plebeians; and some idea may be formed of its vast population from the fact that the king drew from it no less than seventy-two thousand fighting men to oppose the Spaniards. It contained many very sumptuous edifices, the most superb of which was a seminary, where between five and six thousand children were educated at the charge of the royal treasury. The castle of the Atalaya was a remarkable structure, four stories high, and capable of furnishing quarters for a very strong garrison. The castle of Resguardo was five stories high, extending one hundred and eighty paces in front, and two hundred and thirty in depth. The grand alcazar, or palace of the kings of Quiché, surpassed every other edifice; and in the opinion of Torquemada it could compete in opulence with that of Montezuma in Mexico, or that of the Incas in Cuzco. The

front extended three hundred and seventy-six geometrical paces from east to west, and it was seven hundred and twenty-eight paces in depth. It was constructed of hewn stones of various colours. There were six principal divisions. The first contained lodgings for a numerous troop of lancers, archers, and other troops constituting the royal body-guard. The second was assigned to the princes and relations of the king; the third to the monarch himself, containing distinct suites of apartments for the mornings, evenings, and nights. In one of these saloons stood the throne under four canopies of feathers; and in this portion of the palace were the treasury, tribunals of the judges, armoury, aviaries, and menageries. The fourth and fifth divisions were occupied by the queen and royal concubines, with gardens, baths, and places for breeding geese, which were kept to supply feathers for ornaments. The sixth and last division was the residence of the daughters and other females of the blood royal.

"Such is the account as derived from the Spanish historians from manuscripts composed by some of the caciques who first acquired the art of writing; and it is related that from Tanub, who conducted them from the old to the new continent, down to Tecum Umam, was a line of twenty monarchs."*

* "Travels in Central America." By J L. Stephens.

CHAPTER XIV.

ALVARADO—HIS ASSAULT UPON UTATLAN—DESOLATION OF THE CITY—EL SACRIFICATORIO—ANCIENT PAGAN RITES—LUST OF GOLD—RUINS RUINED—INDIAN THREATS—STRANGE STORY OF AN EXISTING CITY OF THE OLDEN TIME—LEAVE QUICHÉ—PUMAS AND MONKEYS—QUESALTENANGO—OCOSINGO—PALENQUE—FIRST VIEW OF THE RUINS—PROFOUND IMPRESSIONS PRODUCED BY THEM—TREED BY PECCARIES—THE RUINS—THE PALACE, ETC.—GIGANTIC FIGURES—MR. STEPHENS'S ACCOUNT—REFLECTIONS—THE DEMON PRIEST—DIFFICULTIES IN THE WAY OF AN EXAMINATION OF THE RUINS—EFFECT OF THE RUINS ON THE TRAVELLER—CHANGE AND DEATH.

HAVING presented the reader with this picture of the city of Utatlan in the days of its splendour, it is sad to describe it as we beheld it. The history of its fall, with the causes that led to it, are too long for insertion here. After a series of sanguinary engagements, in which, despite their immense numbers and determined bravery, the Indians were defeated with enormous losses, they made submission and invited Alvarado to enter their capital. He came with his army, "but observing the strength of the place—that it was well walled and surrounded with a deep ravine, having but two approaches to it, the one by an ascent of twenty-five steps, and the other by a causeway, and both extremely narrow; that the streets were but of trifling breadth and the houses very lofty; that there were neither women nor children to be seen; and that the Indians seemed agitated,—the soldiers began to suspect some deceit."

That these suspicions were well founded soon became evident, as the Indian allies of Quesaltenango reported that

they had ascertained that the people intended to commit their capital to the flames that very night, and seize the opportunity afforded by the confusion to fall upon their enemies and massacre them every one. "These tidings were found to be in accordance with the movements of the Utatlans; and on examining the houses, the Spaniards discovered that there were no preparations of provisions to regale them, as had been promised, but everywhere was a quantity of light dry fuel and other combustibles. Alvarado called his officers together and laid before them their perilous situation, and the immediate necessity of withdrawing from the place; and pretending to the king and his caciques that their horses were better in the open fields, the troops were collected, and without any appearance of alarm marched in good order to the plain. The king, with pretended courtesy, accompanied them; and Alvarado, taking advantage of the opportunity, made him prisoner, and after trial and proof of his treachery, hung him on the spot. But neither the death of Tecum nor the ignominious execution of his son could quell the fierce spirit of the Quichés. A new ebullition of animosity and rage broke forth. A general attack was made upon the Spaniards. But Spanish bravery and discipline increased with danger; and after a dreadful havoc by the artillery and horses, the Indians abandoned a field covered with their dead, and Utatlan the capital, with the whole kingdom of Quiché, fell into the hands of Alvarado and the Spaniards."*

We stood upon the highest point of the relics of the fortress of Resguardo, and gazed with a deep interest upon the great plain beyond, where these scenes had been enacted. All around was now the silence of desolation where three centuries since were exhibited the pomp and power of a

* Stephens.

sovereign at the head of his people. They are gone: their ruthless conquerors are gone, and the city itself, for the possession and defence of which scores of thousands died, is crumbling piecemeal to ruin.

The great seminary, the alcazar, and other edifices of the kings of Quiché, are now one shapeless mass of ruins. Much of this demolition is due to the natives, who have carried off great quantities of the materials to build their present village. Enough remains, however, to give a pretty accurate idea of the general arrangement of the buildings as well as of the shape and disposition of the various apartments. We noticed here and there, wherever a portion of a wall had been sheltered, that some of the original colouring remained. It seems probable, therefore, that the whole of the interiors had formerly been ornamented with paintings.

It was sad to tread these ruined halls, which answered to our steps with a melancholy echo, and to think of the days when they sheltered the representatives of a great and powerful people. The snake, the basilisk, and the owl now occupy apartments once consecrated to beauty. And here again I could not help reflecting on the vanity of human wishes and ambition. Kings had ruled here; but their place no longer knows them; their race has vanished; their very subjects have either disappeared or have become strangely deteriorated; while the ambitious conquerors of these fair realms, urged on by their insatiable lust of gold, overthrew and destroyed what they were unable to reconstruct.

I can only afford space for a glance at one or two of the remains most worthy of notice. Perhaps the most remarkable is that which has received the title of El Sacrificatorio, and which is supposed to have been a place of sacrifice. It is a four-sided structure of stone, measuring sixty-six feet square at the base, and as it slopes towards the summit, it

presents the appearance of a truncated pyramid. It is about thirty-three feet in height. There are ranges of steps in the middle of three of its sides; these steps are seventeen inches high, but are only eight inches broad. If these dimensions had been reversed the effect would have been much better, and it would have been much easier to ascend or descend them. Looking down from above, notwithstanding the limited height, the visitor feels an unpleasant sensation of insecurity owing to the narrowness of the steps and their extreme steepness. There are buttresses at the corners of the pyramid; but what their object could have been it is not easy to ascertain. To support a pyramid seems an unnecessary precaution, and yet what other object the builders had was hard to guess. On the western side there are no steps, and here the sloping wall is plastered smoothly with the hard cement which we had remarked on the floors of the palace. At the edges a little of this coating had been broken off, and we observed that it had been put on in three thicknesses, and also that it had been originally decorated with painted figures.

The summit of this structure has been demolished, but we had very little doubt that in the olden time it bore an altar often reeking with the blood of human victims. What a terrible spectacle it must have been to behold the space below packed with vast crowds of superstitious worshippers, their fierce eager faces upturned to the lofty scene whereon were gathered the priests and their bound and helpless victims. We may suppose that the dreadful ceremony opened with the celebration of some lesser rites which gave the victims a short respite in which to contemplate the full horror of their situation. Slowly these are got through; minute by minute the time for the bloody tragedy approaches, and deeper and more fiend-like becomes the expression com-

mon to the great crowd below which sways from side to side in subdued yet fierce excitement, and from which rises a deep murmur, ominous of the coming storm. As the priests grasp the victims and their assistants place them over the altar, the solemn hum deepens into a dull roar of brutal joy, which is intensified when at the blows of the sacrificial knife blood spouts over the altar and trickles in small streamlets down the flights of steps. Some of those nearest to the pyramid imbrue their hands in the crimson pool and toss it towards the idol to which the victim is immolated in an *accés* of horrid zeal, the gory shower falling back upon their faces and giving them a wilder and more demon-like aspect. Strange scenes these old walls have witnessed. Better, beyond doubt, it has been that the fierce Spaniard wrought their ruin than that the disciples of a foul and bloody superstition should have continued for generations longer to outrage God by their pagan rites. After all, the basilisk, despite his fabled terrors, is a less objectionable resident of these old ruins than the hideous Moloch in whose face was death.

Mr. Stephens, describing a sacrifice, says :—"The barbarous ministers carried up the victim entirely naked, pointed out the idol to which the sacrifice was made, that the people might pay their adorations, and then extended him upon the altar. This had a convex surface, and the body of the victim lay arched, with the trunk elevated and the head and feet depressed. Four priests held the legs and arms, and another kept his head firm with a wooden instrument made in the form of a coiled serpent, so that he was prevented from making the least movement. The head priest then approached, and with a knife made of flint cut an aperture in the breast, tore out the heart, which, yet palpitating, he offered to the sun, and then threw it at the feet of the idol. If the idol was gigantic and hollow, it was usual to

introduce the heart of the victim into its mouth with a golden spoon. If the victim was a prisoner of war, as soon as he was sacrificed they cut off the head, to preserve the skull, and threw the body down the steps, when it was taken up by the officer or soldier to whom the prisoner had belonged and carried to his house, to be dressed and served up as an entertainment for his friends. If he was not a prisoner of war, but a slave purchased for the sacrifice, the proprietor carried off the body for the same purpose. In recurring to the barbarous scenes of which the spot had been the theatre, it seemed a righteous award that the bloody altar was hurled down and the race of its ministers destroyed."

From the circumstance that neither statues, carved figures, nor hieroglyphics are found at Quiché, it seems highly probable that it was not built by the same race that built Copan and Quirigua. We know much of the history of Quiché, and that it was in the zenith of its prosperity at the time of Alvarado's fatal visit; and as we have no mention of either Copan or Quirigua, which differ so materially in their architecture and in their ornamentation, we may assume for them an antiquity vastly greater. The lust of gold led to the destruction of Quiché, and this same lust even aided Time in his assaults upon its remains. A small gold image having been found among the ruins, it was sent to the President, Seravia, of Guatemala, who immediately set on foot a commission to explore the place thoroughly for hidden treasure. In this search the palace, which had been in comparative preservation so late as about the year 1807, was completely demolished; and had it not been for the veneration in which the ruins were held by the Indian natives of the locality, who rose and threatened to put the workmen to death if they did not desist from their work of spoliation, not a stone would have been left upon another.

We were shown a small hollow, which was stated to be the opening of an underground passage connecting the ruins with Mexico! By pulling aside a few stones, we discovered a tunnel arched over with large flag-stones, so laid that they overlapped each other and formed a pointed roof in the way we remarked at Palenque. The builders of these ancient cities seem to have been ignorant of the various forms of arch used in other countries. We nowhere saw either the rounded, Gothic, or other form; passages, doorways, etc., were bridged over by large, flat stones, each successive one of which projected somewhat beyond that beneath, and in this way an arch was formed, clumsy in appearance, but very massive.

The Indians about Quiché are said to preserve in an uncommon degree the customs and characteristics of their ancestors. They are jealous of strangers, and dislike the curiosity which they often manifest with regard to the ruins. They are nominally Christians, and attend the ceremonies of the Church with punctuality and decorum; but we were given to understand that they are still very superstitious, and are not quite free from suspicion of idolatry, notwithstanding the zealous care of the clergy. In caves and in the gloomy recesses of the forests it is said they sometimes assemble for the worship of the deities of their pagan ancestors, and they do this so secretly that it is only known as a rumour. The foundation for it eludes the search, but its persistence leaves little doubt of its truth.

Here we again heard of the existence of that wonderful city which the padre of Santa Cruz del Quiché told Mr. Stephens he had himself beheld from the summit of the sierra near Chajul. This is a city inhabited at this present day by a race speaking the Maya language, and who are as independent as were their ancestors before the Spanish Con-

quest. These Indians had never tolerated any intercourse with the white invaders of the country, and our informant said that they lived in a large city, whose white buildings and towers could be observed glistening in the sun from the top of the sierra by any one that took the trouble to climb up there. We would have been only too glad to do a little exploring round this interesting district, but, as I have already said, we had no time to spare for side expeditions, unless when, as in the case of Quiché, the place happened to lie close to the road by which we were journeying. Mr. Stephens writes as follows of this most interesting statement: "But the thing that roused us was the assertion by the padre that four days on the road to Mexico, on the other side of the great sierra, was a living city, large and populous, occupied by Indians precisely in the same state as before the discovery of America. He had heard it many years before at the village of Chajul, and was told by the villagers that from the topmost ridge of the sierra this city was distinctly visible. He was then young, and with much labour climbed to the naked summit of the sierra, from which, at a height of ten thousand or twelve thousand feet, he looked over an immense plain extending towards Yucatan and the Gulf of Mexico, and saw at a great distance a large city spread over a great space, and with turrets white and glittering in the sun. The traditionary account of the Indians of Chajul is, that no white man has ever reached this city; that the inhabitants speak the Maya language, are aware that a race of strangers has conquered the whole country around, and murder any white man who attempts to enter their territory. They have no coin or other circulating medium; no horses, cattle, mules, or other domestic animals, except fowls, and the cocks they keep under ground, to prevent their crowing being heard.

"There was a wild novelty—something that touched the imagination—in every step of our journey in that country; the old padre, in the deep stillness of the dimly-lighted convent, with his long black coat like a robe, and his flashing eye, called up an image of the bold and resolute priests who accompanied the armies of the conquerors; and as he drew a map on the table and pointed out the sierra to the top of which he had climbed, and the position of the mysterious city, the interest awakened in us was the most thrilling I have ever experienced. One look at that city was worth ten years of an every-day life. If he be right, a place is left where Indians and an Indian city exist as Cortez and Alvarado found them; there are men living who can solve the mystery that hangs over the ruined cities of America, perhaps who can go to Copan and read the inscriptions on its monuments. No subject more exciting and attractive presents itself to my mind, and the deep impression of that night will never be effaced."

We left the ruins of Quiché as evening was drawing on, and after again scrambling down and up the tremendous ravine, we reached the modern village, where we stayed the night. We were glad to leave before daybreak in the morning, as our guides told us that an ominous curiosity had been awakened among the natives as to the object of our visit, and they feared that if we did not take French leave we might be subjected to some unpleasantness. We rose in the dark and set out quietly, not without some apprehensions of being molested and detained. But happily our departure was unnoticed; and when the sun rose we had put several miles between us and Santa Cruz del Quiché.

During this day's journey we had a little adventure. Since coming into the country we had not enjoyed much sport; indeed we had no time, as each day was wholly

devoted to the route, or in examining some ancient ruin or other object of interest. This day, however, while proceeding through a stretch of forest, we beheld the unusual spectacle of pumas chasing monkeys among the trees. Hearing heavy bodies swinging through the branches some little distance ahead, we cautiously advanced, and presently, guided by the shaking of the foliage and the nuts and small dry twigs that fell to the earth, we detected two pumas clambering with great activity among the lianas and branches, while above them were two monkeys, who seemed well aware of the dangerous nature of their neighbours. Apparently one was rather disposed to hold his ground. He grasped a branch with both his forehands, and made faces expressive of rage mingled with fear at the foremost of the pumas. The latter sprang lithely aloft, and immediately the monkey's valour evaporated. With a barking kind of scream he loosed his grip with paw and tail, and turned to fly from the spot. Unluckily for him he chose a bad direction in which to leave the tree. The next tree was at a slightly greater distance than he could spring, and while measuring the intervening space with his eye and glancing about to descry a better mode of retreat, the puma gained upon him, and with an easy pat of her fore paw sent poor Jacko flying through the branches towards the earth, where he arrived with a dull, heavy thud. He just twitched his tail about once or twice, stretched himself out, and died. The second puma pursued the remaining monkey; but that animal was more fortunate than his comrade in choosing a line of retreat. With extraordinary swiftness he rather flew than scrambled from tree to tree, and easily distanced his pursuer, who indeed gave up the attempt to follow him after the first branch or two.

As yet we had not been observed by either of the animals, who were too intent on their own sport to regard any-

thing else. They descended the tree, apparently with the intention of securing the monkey which had been killed, and had got quite close to the ground, when all of a sudden their eyes fell upon us, drawn up in full view and quietly regarding their proceedings. At first it seemed as if they did not quite realize what we were; then their bodies were stretched out on the large branches, along which they "flattened" their heads, and their eyes seemed filled with a greenish blaze of anger. Will and I slipped out of our saddles to take a better aim, as our mules were beginning to get skittish, and handing them over to the guides, we each took a puma and fired. Both shots sounded together, but the result was not the same. The puma at which I had aimed was badly placed for a certain shot, his forehead being alone visible, and it sloped at such an angle from me that my ball glanced along it without further injury to the beast than partially to stun it. It fell, however, along with the other, which was quite dead; and as we approached, it suddenly sprang to its feet, and before I could attempt to defend myself seized me in its claws and hurled me to the earth! I was half dazed with the shock, and hardly knew what had occurred, the whole affair having taken place in a moment. The puma contented itself with knocking me down, and I received no other injury than one or two rather ugly scratches, and a shock to the nerves. Before Will could use his rifle, the agile beast sprang to the cover of the dense bushes that hemmed in the track and disappeared. We were glad, however, to have one of them as a trophy; and we soon had his skin off, leaving his blood-covered carcass to lie in the path, where doubtless it was speedily discovered by zopilotes and carnivorous insects.

The reader must now imagine himself transported to Palenque. It is true that we paid a brief visit to the ruins

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of Quesaltenango and Ocosingo; but our survey was so brief and unsatisfactory that I will not trouble him with my observations. I will not describe our journey over the mountains, where we had to dismount from our mules and trust ourselves to sillas borne upon men's shoulders. We were thus carried along the verge of a ravine of tremendous depth, and at every faltering step of my porter my heart gave a great jump, as I thought he was about to collapse under my weight and tumble down headlong. After many hardships and dangers we finally one day, about mid-day, reached the village of Palenque, and prepared at once to examine the ruins, which lie at a wild and desolate spot about eight miles distant.

We first of all found, in answer to our inquiries, that we could not hope to visit the ruins each day, returning at night to the village, as the road was so bad that the time and labour consumed in achieving even that short distance would leave us little inclination and opportunity for exploration. Our first object, then, was to carry out to the ruins every article needful to us during a short sojourn among them; and with much trouble we finally succeeded in doing this, notwithstanding considerable disinclination to aid us on the part of many of the Indians, who viewed our designs with that dull suspicion which, as I have already stated, seems one of the alternative states of the native mind.

We found that the modern village of Palenque had suffered a considerable abatement of its former importance, which was a favourite topic among the older inhabitants. A good many years before the period of our visit it had derived much prosperity from the overland trade from Guatemala; but the increase of the British settlement at Belize had diverted this traffic, and Palenque suffered accordingly. In addition, it had the misfortune to be visited by

cholera, which swept off half its inhabitants. Even at the time of our visit there were abundant traces of this visitation in ruined houses, the former owners of which had perished *en masse*, and which were now dropping piecemeal to decay. The streets were silent and deserted; and the evening sun cast the shadow of the old church upon the emerald turf which covered the pavement of the great square. Still, making every allowance for the effects of the misfortunes from which the village has suffered, we thought the description of its quondam glories much exaggerated. There was little cleared land in the vicinity, and the forest came up directly to the houses, which seemed as if about to be "crowded out" by the thick, matted trees.

Palenque is situated in the province of Tzendales, and according to its prefeto, as quoted by Mr. Stephens, it remained in the hands of the Indians for a century after the conquest of Chiapas had been effected. It is more than two centuries since the faith was first preached here by one Lorenzo Mugil, a missionary sent hither from Rome. His memory appears to be regarded with reverence among the Indians, as they still preserve his dress as an object of veneration. In the year 1700, Spain extended her sovereignty over the inhabitants; and here, as has occurred elsewhere, the natives preferred patriotism to Christianity (as if they were antagonistic elements), and threw off their allegiance to Rome and to Spain together. Many outrages were committed by the rebels: priests were murdered, churches desecrated, white men massacred. In short, every crime was committed which was possible under the circumstances. This revolt, however, was speedily quelled, and in a short time order and religion were again restored.

There are in the neighbourhood some wild tribes which have never been civilized or converted. These people re-

ceive the generic title of "Caribs," and their territories are separated from those of their somewhat more advanced neighbours by a small river called the Chacamal. From a circumstance narrated by the prefect of Palenque to Mr. Stephens, it would seem that these natives are sufficiently ready to embrace Christianity, unless they have changed very greatly of late years. "Fifty years ago the Padre Calderon, an uncle of the prefect's wife, attended by his sacristan, an Indian, was bathing in the river, when the latter cried out in alarm that some Caribs were looking at them, and attempted to flee; but the padre took his cane and went toward them. The Caribs fell down before him, conducted him to their huts, and gave him an invitation to return and make them a visit on a certain day. On the day appointed, the padre went with his sacristan, and found a gathering of Caribs and a great feast prepared for him. He remained with them some time, and invited them in return to the village of Palenque on the day of the *fête* of St. Domingo. A large party of these wild Indians attended, bringing with them tiger's meat, monkey's meat, and cocoa, as presents. They listened to mass, and beheld all the ceremonies of the Church; whereupon they invited the padre to come among them and teach them. And they erected a hut at the place where they had first met him, which he consecrated as a church; and he taught his sacristan to say mass to them every Sunday.* As the prefect said, if he had lived many of them would probably have been Christianized; but, unfortunately, he died. The Caribs retired into the wilderness, and not one had appeared in the village since."

Having well-nigh exhausted the capacity of the few miserable shops in the village to supply us with provisions, we at

* There are some circumstances which render this part of the statement extremely doubtful.

length set out, on the day following our arrival, for the goal of our expedition. We had live meat and dead meat—to wit, bacon, or rather pork, and fowl; the fowls were carried by the natives that we had hired as porters, and two of these fellows staggered along under such a heterogeneous assortment of baggage as I had never before beheld. Each of them carried half a dozen live fowls strapped by the legs to a belt round the waist; on their shoulders were trunks, containing our changes of clothes and such other articles as we absolutely required at the ruins; tied to the boxes were great pieces of pork hacked at the moment of starting from the carcass of a pig which had succumbed to a well-directed bullet from Will's rifle. These were crusted over with salt, which had been pounded and ground into them in the hope that it would preserve the meat until it should be required. This hope proved illusory. When one of the pieces had been boiled, and the cover removed from the pot, the odours that emanated were neither those of Ind nor of Araby the Blest. We had to throw away the whole of it; that is, Will and I declined to eat it. The Indians and the guides seemed to consider it a great delicacy, and wondered at our generosity in resigning it to them. This fancied consideration on our part scored a mark in our favour; and our attendants exerted themselves with good will to make us comfortable.

But I am anticipating. After setting out from the modern Palenque, in two hours we found ourselves on the bank of a stream which we learned was named the Rio Micol; and after crossing this we pushed through the forest, and in half an hour struck another stream, the Otula, which dashed merrily over its stony channel—

> "Darkened by shadows of earth,
> But reflecting an image of heaven,"

like the hearts of the farmers of Acadie. In a few minutes we beheld familiar objects among the trees and bushes;—piles of stones displaced from creeper-clad walls, large blocks covered with sculpture; terraces overgrown with trees and bushes, their massive sides showing here and there, through rents in their vesture of vegetation, vast buildings ruined by time aided by the roots of large trees which forced asunder great masses of masonry. In a word, we were at Palenque.

As we approached the ruins, filled with the recollections of Copan and Quirigua, I felt as if entering among the tombs of the dead. Everything about me spoke of man's handiwork set at nought by time, and overrun with the myriad productions of nature. An inexpressible emotion fills the mind at the sight of these great buildings, broken, and half seen through the entanglement of forest. Their vastness astonishes; their massive ornamentation speaks of taste and culture on the part of their unknown and long-forgotten builders; the silence of the spot, its remoteness from human intercourse, the dense enshrouding forest which for so long had concealed the great city from the observation of the world, and whose giant trees, standing mute and motionless in the sultry air, seemed to brood over the secrets of the place—all these appealed with a powerful effect to my imagination. In approaching the ruins, the pathway ascends somewhat rapidly the slope of the hills, or of the successive plateaus, which, from their regularity, appear to be rather the result of man's labour than natural creations. As we got within sight of the remains of the great city, our Indians, with loud cries, drew our attention to the palace, which we dimly discerned among the trees, its heavy front ornamented with figures in stucco, which seemed in motion as the flickering shades of the branches passed and repassed across them.

If we take this building as a centre, the city may be regarded as placed upon the slope of the foot-hills of the Cordilleras. Some have stated that from the tops of the temples they have discerned the waters of the Gulf of Mexico; but this is manifestly absurd. If they could catch the distant gleam of the lake of Catasaya, which lies about thirty miles to the northward, it is the utmost point to which their vision could reach. As the ocean is probably fully eighty miles distant, it would require the eye to be placed at an altitude of some four hundred feet in order to see it; and it need hardly be said there is no temple at Palenque of that height.

We climbed the pyramids and entered the ruins, and their sublime influences made us silent. We wandered about from one great relic to another. We examined the massive palace, the dismantled temples, the pyramids, and statues, and saw that their grandeur had not been exaggerated. They are more than grand—they are absolutely awe-inspiring. The visitor finds himself wondering whether these vast remains are indeed the work of men, or whether they have not rather been erected by a race of giants that have vanished from our earth.

Having taken our first cursory view of the most striking buildings, I directed my attention towards making ourselves comfortable. I looked around for my friend. He was nowhere to be seen. Thinking he was within the palace I called, but got no answer. My voice reverberated along the empty corridors with a hollow sound; and several bats, disturbed by the noise, flitted about in the twilight of these gloomy passages. When the imagination is powerfully excited, trivial things receive undue attention. It seemed to me as if these ugly beings were the spirits of the ancient possessors of these halls appearing to protest against our

entry. On stepping outside one of the many doorways, I heard shouts and shots at some distance, and recognizing Will's voice, I set off for the spot at the best pace the difficulties of the path would allow. On coming within speaking distance, I hailed him. "Take care of yourself," he shouted back. "I'm treed by peccaries, and if they catch a sight of you they will put you up a tree in no time." I looked to my rifle, and having filled the magazine, I pushed forward quietly. Soon I got within sight of my friend, who sat astride of a large branch about ten feet from the ground, while round about below were twenty or thirty of the vicious little animals which he had been incautious enough to attack. He had expended all the cartridges he had with him, and had already killed seven or eight of the peccaries. I climbed into a tree before beginning my assault upon the herd, well aware that if I did not place myself in a position of safety, the very first shot would bring the whole body of enraged animals upon me, when it would perhaps be too late to look out for safe quarters. I soon climbed to a fork which afforded me a convenient refuge; and at my first shot a pig jumped into the air, and lay kicking and squealing upon the ground. The others looked up at Will with, if anything, increased rage, and danced about in an acme of passion. Another shot produced a like result. But after this they discovered my whereabouts, and charged my tree, where they took up their position, grunting and champing their tusks until foam flew from their jaws. I cared little, however, for their demonstrations. They had put themselves completely within my power, and shot after shot thinned their ranks; the survivors, apparently nothing daunted, still keeping their post at the foot of the tree. Several of them ran round it as if searching for a mode of ascent, and leaped against the trunk, resting their fore legs

upon it, and looking up as if they cursed me for being beyond their reach. A bullet was the invariable reply to these manœuvres, and in a few minutes the greater number of the fierce but silly creatures lay dead over the ground. About six remained, and seeing that flight was the best course, they trotted off, the last of their number falling to a shot just as he was disappearing in the jungle.

Will said he had heard a noise like the clattering of castanets in the bushes, and being curious to know what caused it, he followed the sound. Presently he came on a small pig-like animal rooting vigorously among the deep vegetable mould; and before realizing the danger of the proceeding, although cautioned by an Indian, who, knowing what was coming, immediately took to his heels, he fired at it. The dying squeals, as well as the report of the rifle, brought the animal's comrades to its aid, as is their invariable custom; and these seeing Will, instantly made a rush at him. He was thus driven to the tree in which I had found him; but as he had only a few rounds of ammunition with him at the time, he would have been kept prisoner longer than would have been agreeable had I not been there to come to his assistance.

The Indians were delighted to be presented with such a splendid supply of pork; and they spent an hour or two in cleaning the peccaries and stowing away the meat in some recondite corner of the palace.

We took up our quarters in a great gallery which seemed to promise us shelter from the weather. We were fortunate in being here at the dry season. But still there were often sudden storms accompanied by deluges of rain, and it was well to provide against any such contingency by obtaining the best shelter the palace could afford.

In building the pyramids at Palenque, the constructers

laid out the natural elevations in terraces. They lined them with stone and divided them into stages, just as was done by the Toltecs when erecting the pyramids of Teotihuacan. There are few things more striking than a walk among these extraordinary buildings. The isolation, the silence, the deep solitude, the gloomy shadow of the trees which bend above the edifices and the pyramids, intensify the mystery in which the place is shrouded, and overpower the mind with feelings of the deepest melancholy. Since the period of Mr. Stephens's visit, the years that had passed had wrought some changes. Portions of the walls which he had found standing are now overthrown; the whole front of the temple of the cross is laid open, and in the temple of the lion the finest bas-relief on the altar has altogether disappeared.

As time goes on, still further ravages will be wrought among these venerable buildings. In fifty years, perhaps a mere mass of shapeless ruins will alone mark the site.

While some of our Indians were clearing out the palace for our accommodation, we wandered about, preceded by others who hewed a passage for us with their machetes through the thick growth of plants and trees. Wherever we penetrated amid the silence of this virgin forest we came upon vestiges of the ancient city; before, behind, upon all sides we were surrounded by them, and how far they extend through the solitudes of the forest is as yet unknown.

We returned to the palace as twilight was falling upon the forest, and as we passed among the dimly seen ruins we felt their impressiveness even more than when they were illuminated by the full light of day. Fancy had more play; and upon occasions such as this, when there was no lack of every element likely to arouse the imagination, we figured to ourselves what the city must have been in its pristine mag-

nificence, when every house was lighted up, and hill and dell alike teemed with population.

We established our kitchen as well as our dining-room in the outer corridor, which runs along the eastern front of the palace, and we slung our hammocks in the eastern gallery of the inner wing. Our dining-room commanded a magnificent prospect over the top of the forest; from our "bedroom" the view was confined to the court-yard outside. Finding that our meals were served with great irregularity, owing, as our cook explained, to the difficulty of both cooking and keeping the fire going, we detailed two Indians to act under his orders as hewers of wood and drawers of water. After this arrangement we always knew when to return to the palace from our wanderings over the great space occupied by the ruined city. The remainder of our attendants, including our guides, accompanied us and hewed away the thick growth of plants and branches that covered the buildings so thickly as almost to hide some of them from observation. We had to keep our eyes upon these fellows, however, as when not watched they dropped work and sat down to smoke and chat. As a rule the indigenous natives of America are extremely lazy—work is an abomination to them. But as they contrive to live without it, perhaps this is not surprising. The machete, a huge knife with a keen, heavy blade, is their pet weapon, or implement for forest work; and with this they can do a good deal of work if they can be induced to bestir themselves. When several of them are acting together, they can clear a path through the entangled forest almost as fast as their employer can walk after them. They are also expert in the use of the axe, and a couple of them will cut down an enormous tree with as much ease, apparently, as an unskilled person could cut down a small shrub. But for the aid furnished by these natives we

should have been unable to examine a single building satisfactorily, so smothered in vegetation are they, both around the sides and on the top.

The palace may be regarded as divided into two well-defined divisions. A double corridor or aisle runs along three sides—namely, on the east, north, and west, enclosing behind also a double corridor and two court-yards of different dimensions. In one of these passages the irrepressible tourist had scratched his name; and at one place were some lines which I was unable to read owing to their height above the floor. It struck me as a good background for the proverbial "John Smith," to show off his utter insignificance against.

The palace is a huge rectangular mass of buildings with a frontage of two hundred and twenty-eight feet in length and a depth of one hundred and eighty feet. Its height is out of all proportion to its length, being only twenty-five feet. But all round projects a massive cornice of stone. In the front there are fourteen doorways, each nine feet wide, and separated from each other by piers averaging a width of seven feet. As the visitor faces the palace, eight of the left-hand piers have fallen, and lie in a confused mass of rubbish on the terrace, overgrown with weeds, etc. The extreme right-hand angle has also fallen. There remain standing but six of the piers, and the rest of the façade is quite open.

Generally speaking, outside the galleries nothing in this great building appears to have been executed with method or upon a regular plan. The various parts exhibit a great variety in height and size, which suggests the idea that they were built as occasion required and without consideration for uniformity with what had been already constructed. The court-yards enclosed within the galleries form irregular

rectangles, and the northern side of the largest is about seven feet longer than the southern side. The buildings are of stone cemented together with lime mortar, and the whole of the front was evidently covered with stucco and then painted. The piers between the doorways are ornamented with figures in bas-relief, and higher up we observed three hieroglyphical figures deeply sunk in the stucco. On the south side, where are the apartments, the want of uniformity of design is most apparent. Here there is scarcely a vestige of plan: great buildings and small are huddled together. They are built upon unequal lines, and advance towards each other or recede in a manner for which there has apparently been no object. Their roofs are perpendicular or slanting; and their ornamentation, whether rich or simple in design, is scattered over them in a hap-hazard manner.

Speaking of the stucco figures alluded to above, Mr. Stephens says:—"The principal personage stands in an upright position and in profile, exhibiting an extraordinary facial angle of about 45°. The upper part of the head seems to have been compressed and lengthened, perhaps by the same process employed upon the heads of the Choctaw and Flatheads of our own country. The head represents a species of which few are seen in this part of the country at the present time. The head-dress is evidently a plume of feathers; over the shoulders is a short covering decorated with studs, and a breastplate; part of the ornament of the girdle is broken; the tunic is probably a leopard's skin; and the whole dress no doubt exhibits the costume of this unknown people. He holds in his hand a staff or sceptre; and opposite his hands are the marks of three hieroglyphics, which have decayed or been broken off. At his feet are two naked figures seated cross-legged and apparently suppliants. A fertile imagination might find many explanations for these

strange figures, but no satisfactory interpretation suggests itself to my mind. The hieroglyphics doubtless tell us their history. The stucco is of admirable consistency and hard as stone. It was painted; and in different places about it we discovered the remains of red, blue, yellow, black, and white.

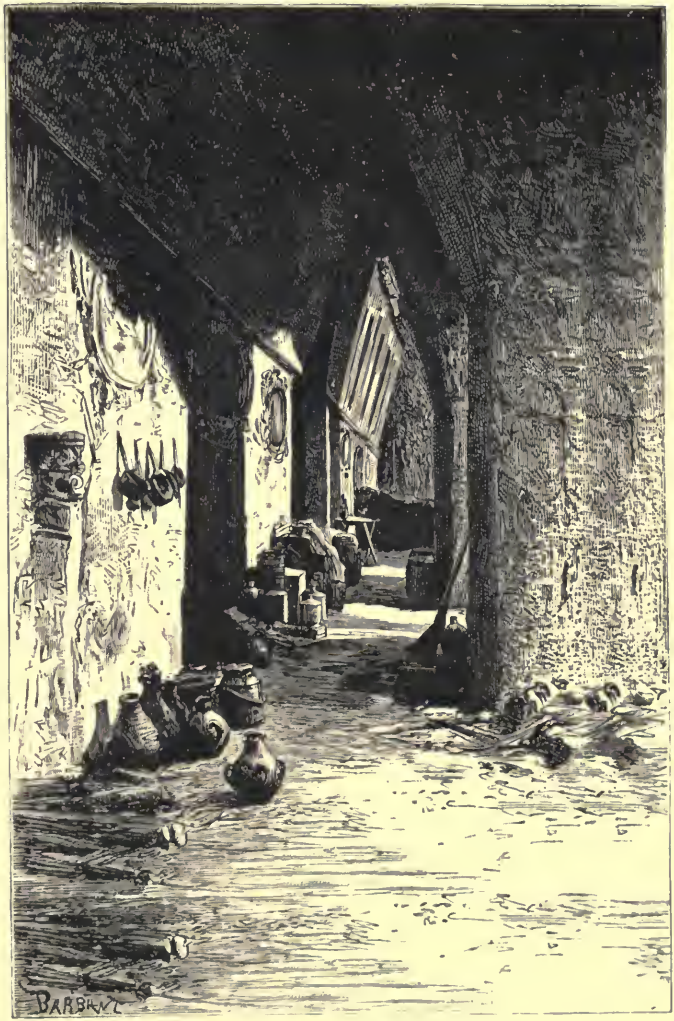
"The piers which are still standing contain other figures of the same general character, but which unfortunately are more mutilated; and from the declivity of the terrace it was hard to set up the camera lucida in such a position as to draw them. The piers which are fallen were no doubt enriched with the same ornaments. Each one had some specific meaning, and the whole probably presented some allegory or history; and when entire and painted, the effect in ascending the terrace must have been imposing and beautiful."

With reference to the front of the building, Mr. Stephens writes:—"The principal doorway is not distinguished by its size or by any superior ornament, but is only indicated by a range of broad stone steps leading up to it on the terrace. The doorways have no doors, nor are there the remains of any. Within, on each side, are three niches in the wall, about eight or ten inches square, with a cylindrical stone about two inches in diameter fixed upright, by which perhaps a door was secured.

"Along the cornice outside, projecting about a foot beyond the front, holes were drilled at intervals through the stone; and our impression was that an immense cotton cloth, running the whole length of the building, perhaps painted in a style corresponding with the ornaments, was attached to this cornice, and raised and lowered like a curtain, according to the exigencies of sun and rain. Such a curtain is used now in front of the piazzas of some haciendas in Yucatan.

"The tops of the doorways were all broken. They had evidently been square, and over every one were large niches in the wall on each side in which the lintels had been laid. These lintels had all fallen, and the stones above formed broken natural arches. Underneath were heaps of rubbish; but there were no remains of lintels. If they had been single slabs of stone some of them must have been visible and prominent; and we made up our minds that those lintels were of *wood*. We had no authority for this. It is not suggested either by Del Rio or Captain Dupaix, and perhaps we should not have ventured the conclusion but for the wooden lintel which we had seen over the doorway of Ocosingo; and by what we saw afterwards in Yucatan we were confirmed beyond all doubt in our opinion. I do not conceive, however, that this gives any conclusive data in regard to the age of the buildings. The wood, if such as we saw in the other places, would be very lasting. Its decay must have been extremely slow, and centuries may have elapsed since it perished altogether.

"The building has two parallel corridors running lengthwise on all four of its sides. In front these corridors are about nine feet wide, and extend the whole length of the building, upwards of two hundred feet. In the long wall that divides them there is but one door, which is opposite the principal door of entrance, and has a corresponding one on the other side leading to a court-yard in the rear. The floors are of cement, as hard as the best seen in the remains of Roman baths and cisterns. The walls are about ten feet high, plastered, and on each side of the principal entrance ornamented with medallions, of which the borders only remain; these perhaps contained the busts of the royal family. The separating wall had apertures of about a foot, probably intended for purposes of ventilation. Some were of



CORRIDOR OF THE PALACE.

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this form , and some of this , which have been called the Greek cross and the Egyptian tau, and made the subject of much learned speculation."

Mr. Stephens inferred that the long unbroken corridors in front of the palace were intended as ante-chambers for lords and other dignitaries of the court. At any rate, whoever promenaded there must have enjoyed a noble prospect over the swelling woods and cultivated lands which, doubtless, at that day occupied much of the ground now usurped by the forest.

"From the centre door of this corridor a range of stone steps, thirty feet long, leads to a rectangular court-yard eighty feet long by seventy feet broad. On each side of the steps are grim and gigantic figures carved in stone in *basso-relievo*, nine or ten feet high, and in a position slightly inclined backward from the end of the steps to the floor of the corridor. They are adorned with rich head-dresses and necklaces; but their attitude is that of pain and trouble. The design and anatomical proportions of the figures are faulty. But there is a force of expression about them which shows the skill and conceptive power of the artist."

We found that apartments lay upon each side of the palace, and those we inferred to have been used as sleeping-rooms. On one side the piers have crumbled to pieces; but on the opposite side they still remain entire, and these are adorned with stucco figures. It is marvellous that these figures should have survived the influences of the weather for so many centuries. There are in this country many alternations of wet and dry, of storm and sunshine, and yet these stuccos have survived, and are to-day almost as perfect as when they were first put up!

Our first night in the ruins was an impressive experience which haunts my recollection. We got back, as I have

said, to our quarters as the shades of evening were veiling these mysterious buildings and throwing over them what Pope calls a "browner horrour." In the great gallery a fire had been made, and its ruddy light glowed upon the walls and cast upon them the shadows of our Indians, who supplied the flames with armfuls of fuel. The farther ends of the ambulacrum were swallowed up in darkness as opaque as that of Egypt; but at intervals a vagrant cocuyo or two flickered through a doorway with uncertain gleam and flopped and flew amid the gloomy recesses. Outside all was vague and awful. Our fancies, filled with the scenes we had witnessed, traversed anew the silent paths leading by ruined wall, crumbling monument, or overgrown pyramid; and these were invested by the thickening gloom with a double share of interest and mystery. When we thought of the centuries through which this city has stood here, a melancholy instance of the perishable nature of even man's greatest works, we felt a strange awe subduing our souls. We thought of this great city (now a series of gray forest-covered ruins rising in that desolate spot, the darkness of night shrouding it as it had done for unknown years), as it once was at the evening hour, when the stir of life animated it, and a blaze of lights shone from temple and palace and the houses of its citizens.

The night was calm, but now and then a mournful gust sighed over the forest, and entered with the sense of a presence through the great doorways, moaning along the dismal passages as if the spirits of the founders of the edifice were bewailing its ruin. In the uncertain light huge bats flew in and out, no doubt attracted by the light of the fire; and in that weird place it needed no great stretch of imagination to endow them with something of the supernatural. In the middle of the night a prodigious noise re-

sounded along the great corridors. We sprang up to listen; but it was not repeated. The Indians huddled together near the fire, mute with terror, and no doubt expecting every moment to behold some horrible sight. Although our hearts beat a little faster than common, we affected to treat the matter as not worthy of remark, though the noises which awakened us certainly were of an uncanny kind. We did not discover until next morning by what they probably had been made. I was dressing just as the night was giving way to a gray twilight, when a large bird almost flew against me, as it entered a doorway from without. I saw at once it was the lechuza or great owl of the country; and it now flashed upon me that this was the creature that had disturbed our sleep with its demoniac gurgling screams. The Indians, however, would not accept this as the explanation, and spoke of sprites and gnomes, and demons of even a darker character, which were said to haunt the ruins. They told us of a huge black spirit which was supposed to issue from the subterranean passage leading out below the palace, and which has also a communication with the interior of the building. This fiend strangles any one who has the evil fortune to lie in his direct path. One of the natives said he had seen him coming up the dark stairway, and wherever his eye fell, the spot glowed with a dull red light! It happened to be a night of terrible storm. Thunder roared and bellowed over the woods; and such was its nearness, that the trembling of the air shook pieces of mortar from among the crevices of the ceilings, and these falling upon the party, of whom the narrator was one, caused them to believe the palace was about to fall upon them. Under this impression the Indian ran towards the court-yard, and in passing one of the entrances to the subterranean apartments, his blood froze with horror to perceive rising from the gloomy

void the awful apparition. He saw it go towards the range of doors in the front of the palace; and the shrieks of his comrades announced that they too had seen it. It took its path steadily without deviating, and went towards a great altar where human sacrifices were offered in the olden time; and there, while the lightning played and crackled around, casting its livid light upon the tempest-torn forest, and lighting for a moment every object with great distinctness, the demon priest was seen by the terrified Indians offering the bloody victim to the great idol, whose eyes, reflecting the glare of the demon, glowed luridly in the darkness! This was a wild tale, suited to the spot; and although a smile went round the circle of faces, I am inclined to suspect that the incredulity was simulated. All these natives are extremely superstitious; and it is a fact that it needs great inducement to get any of them to spend a night in the ruins. We had to offer high wages, and this had to be supplemented by the authority of the alcalde, who threatened and stormed before he could get our porters to accompany us when they understood that we meant to remain at the ruins.

With regard to the extent of the ruins, Mr. Stephens says: "Even in this practical age the imagination of man delights in wonders. The Indians and the people of Palenque say that they cover a space of sixty miles; in a series of well-written articles in our own country they have been set down as ten times larger than New York; and lately I have seen an article in some of the newspapers referring to our expedition, which represents this city, *discovered* by us, as having been three times as large as London! It is not in my nature to discredit any marvellous story. I am slow to disbelieve, and would rather sustain all such inventions: but it has been my unhappy lot to find marvels fade away as I approached them—even the Dead Sea lost its mysterious

charm; and besides, as a traveller and 'writer of a book,' I know that if I go wrong those who come after me will not fail to set me right. Under these considerations—not from any wish of my own, and with many thanks to my friends of the press—I am obliged to say that the Indians and people of Palenque really know nothing of the ruins personally, and the other accounts do not rest upon any sufficient foundation. The whole country for miles round is covered with a dense forest of gigantic trees, with a growth of brush and underwood unknown in the wooded deserts of our own country, and impenetrable in any direction except by cutting a way with a machete. What lies buried in that forest it is impossible to say of my own knowledge. Without a guide we might have gone within one hundred feet of all the buildings without discovering one of them.

"Captain Del Rio, the first explorer, with men and means at command, states in his report that in the execution of his commission he cut down and burned all the woods. He does not say how far; but judging from the breaches and excavations made in the interior of the buildings, probably for miles around. Captain Dupaix, acting under a royal commission, and with all the resources such a commission would give, did not discover any more buildings than those mentioned by Del Rio, and we saw only the same; but having the benefit of them as guides—at least of Del Rio, for at that time we had not seen Dupaix's work—we of course saw things that escaped their observation, just as those who come after us will see things that escaped ours. This place, however, was the principal object of our expedition, and it was our wish and intention to make a thorough exploration. Respect for my official character, the special tenor of my passport, and letters from Mexican authorities, gave me every facility. The prefect assumed that I was sent

by my government expressly to explore the ruins; and every person in Palenque, except our friend the alcalde, and even he, as much as the perversity of his disposition would permit, was disposed to assist us. But there were accidental difficulties which were insuperable. First, it was the rainy season. This, under any circumstances, would have made it difficult; but as the rains did not commence till three or four o'clock, and the weather was always clear in the morning, it alone would not have been sufficient to prevent our attempting it. But there were other difficulties which embarrassed us from the beginning, and continued during our whole residence among the ruins. There was not an axe or a spade in the place, and, as usual, the only instrument was the machete, which here was like a short, wide-bladed sword; and the difficulty of procuring Indians to work was greater than at any other place we had visited. It was the season of planting corn, and the Indians, under the immediate pressure of famine, were all busy with their milpas. The price of an Indian's labour was ninepence per day; but the alcalde, who had the direction of this branch of the business, would not let me advance to more than one shilling, and the most he would engage to send was from four to six a day. They would not sleep at the ruins—came late and went away early. Sometimes only two or three appeared, and the same men rarely came twice; so that during our stay we had all the Indians of the village in rotation. This increased very much our labour, as it made it necessary to stand over them constantly to direct their work; and just as one set began to understand precisely what we wanted, we were obliged to teach the same to others; and I may remark that their labour, though nominally cheap, was dear in reference to the work done."

We were rather more fortunate in our experience than

EASTERN FACADE OF THE INTERIOR WING OF THE PALACE OF PALENQUE.

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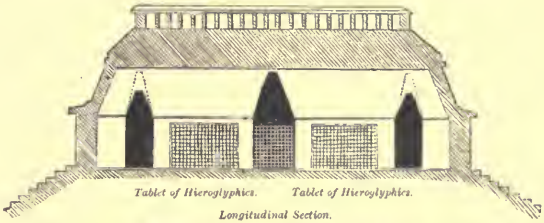
Mr. Stephens seems to have been. We prevailed upon our Indians to remain with us at the ruins, and we therefore had them at hand always when they were wanted. It was also the dry season, which was a great advantage. But with these facilities we were unable to see as much as we would have wished. As I before stated, our time was very limited, owing to my friend being obliged to return home by pressing business; and we had to rush through the scenes I have described without giving any of them the attention their interest demanded. But what we did see does not need the adventitious aid of exaggeration to render it of deep interest.

Leaving the palace by what is known as the subterranean passage (the same as that said by the story-teller to harbour the demon of his tale), the explorer finds himself emerging into daylight—though there are several borrowed windows or openings in this passage—close to the foot of a pyramid, but which is much dilapidated and hirsute with shrubs, trees, etc. This structure appears to have had flights of steps along its sides; but they had been displaced by the roots of trees which had grown up in the crevices, and now lay in masses of ruin at the foot, or here and there wherever their fall had been arrested by accident. By holding on to the branches it is possible to clamber up the steep sides of the pyramid; but there is considerable difficulty in the feat, owing to the insecurity of the stones, which are easily dislodged from their insecure hold; and as many of them are very large and heavy, a limb might easily be crushed if caught between or beneath them. The danger is perhaps greater to those in the rear of the first climber, as the stones gather velocity in their descent, and thunder down the rugged slope of masonry, levelling the bushes and raising a cloud of dust. When the visitor has accomplished about half the ascent, a house becomes visible through a vista in the

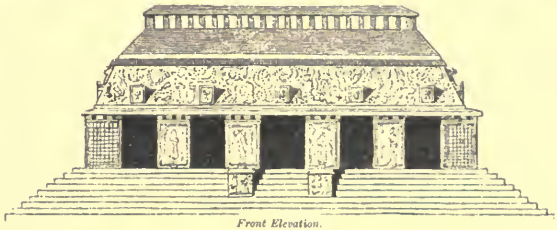
foliage. It is placed upon the top of a mass of masonry, sloping backwards and upwards for one hundred and ten feet. It was of course ruined—great trees hedged it round about, and many were actually growing upon its flagged roof, casting a deep shade upon the building, and accentuating the melancholy feelings excited by the spectacle of its decay.

This building measures seventy-six feet in length, and it has a depth of twenty-five feet. It has a front somewhat like that of the palace, but has only five doors and six piers, all of which remain. The façade was embellished with fine stuccoes; and the terminal piers at each side were ornamented with hieroglyphics in tablets, each of which was divided into ninety-six squares. There are human figures on four of the piers. One represents a woman holding a child in her arms. Round this figure is a richly executed border, and under the feet is a bracket, also ornamented. The head, however, is wanting. The remaining figures present a general similarity to the above, and apparently each of them held an infant. Above them are hieroglyphics. Behind the house is a dark passage, which has been divided into three separate chambers; possibly they may have served as bed-rooms. They have no windows; but instead are ventilated by loop-holes three inches wide and twelve high. The walls are bare and uninteresting, except the back wall of the central chamber, which fronts the entrance door. On this is a large tablet of hieroglyphics four feet six inches wide, and three feet six inches high. How I longed to possess some clew to the meaning of these mysterious inscriptions! The history of the place was without doubt here set down; but it is, unfortunately, in an undecipherable language. These complicated figures seemed to mock me as I gazed at them with a deep longing to fathom their meaning; but they were inscrutable, and I fear they will remain so.

Elevation showing the Building, and the Pyramid on which it stands.

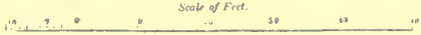


Longitudinal Section.



Front Elevation.

Scale of Feet.



THE PALACE OF PALENQUE RESTORED.

At any rate, they have baffled the skill of every one that has hitherto attempted the task of unravelling their mystery. We wandered through the forest in search of fresh relics, and everywhere we found them. Sometimes a mass of shapeless ruin; often an irregular mound smothered in jungle; often a flight of steps stopped further progress; and on the brushwood being hewed away, we found ourselves confronted with a pyramid, ranges of steps along its sides, and a wilderness of jungle enshrouding it.

I will not fatigue the reader with further details of this extraordinary place. To do so would only weary him, without leaving any definite impression. But I wish I could convey to him an adequate idea of the deep awe which we experienced in scanning these monuments of a departed people. Their silence; their complete isolation from the world; the gloom of the dense forest, less opaque, indeed, than the mystery that shields from our knowledge the history of their builders; the grim idols, and the altars which once ran with human blood; the weird influence of beholding night settling down upon the spot and throwing its sombre mantle alike upon ruins and forest;—these are accessories which the reader cannot have, and which produced in our minds at the time an impression of almost painful intensity. Despite the utter inutility of speculations upon the origin or the history of the ancient dwellers in this place, I was constantly forming conjectures as to who they were, whence they came, and how they vanished. It is always thus with whatever piques our curiosity.

In concluding his notice of Palenque, Mr. Stephens says: "The reader is perhaps disappointed, but we were not. There was no necessity for assigning to the city an immense extent, or an antiquity coeval with that of the Egyptians, or of any other ancient and known people. What we had

before our eyes was grand, curious, and remarkable enough. Here were the remains of a cultivated, polished, and peculiar people, who had passed through all the stages incident to the rise and fall of nations, reached their golden age, and perished, entirely unknown. The links which connected them with the human family were severed and lost, and these were the only memorials of their footsteps upon earth. We lived in the ruined palace of their kings; we went up to their desolate temples and fallen altars; and wherever we moved we saw the evidences of their taste, their skill in arts, their wealth and power. In the midst of desolation and ruin we looked back to the past, cleared away the gloomy forest, and fancied every building perfect, with its terraces and pyramids, its sculptured and painted ornaments, grand, lofty, and imposing, and overlooking an immense inhabited plain; we called back into life the strange people who gazed at us in sadness from the walls; pictured them in fanciful costumes and adorned with plumes of feathers ascending the terraces of the palace and the steps leading to the temples; and often we imagined a scene of unique and gorgeous beauty and magnificence, realizing the creations of Oriental poets, the very spot which fancy would have selected for the 'Happy Valley' of Rasselas."

This eloquent explanation of the feelings touched in Mr. Stephens's breast by the spectacle of these almost unknown ruins, describes more faithfully than I can do the sensations with which my friend and I beheld them. In all that I have seen elsewhere, I have met with nothing which produced impressions as ineffaceable as those I received when viewing the pre-historic relics of Copan, Quirigua, and Palenque. But change is one of Nature's laws:—

> "Change sweepeth over all!
> In showers leaves fall

From the tall forest tree;
On to the sea
Majestic rivers roll—
It is their goal.
Each speeds to perish, in man's simple meaning—
Each disappears;
One common end o'ertakes life's idle dreaming—
Dust, darkness, tears.

"O'er cities of old days
Dumb creatures graze;
Palace and pyramid
In dust are hid;
Even the sky-searching tower
Stands but its hour.
Oceans their wide-stretched beds are ever shifting,
Sea turns to shore;
And stars and systems through dread space are drifting,
To shine no more!" *Anonymous.*

I will here take leave of the reader, happy if I have induced him to accompany me thus far in my wanderings. I do not wish to create in his mind a fictitious interest in these ancient buildings by laboured or fanciful descriptions. I trust it would be unnecessary to have recourse to exaggeration to excite in his mind a sympathy for the fate of their unknown builders. But nothing can add to the effect they produce upon the traveller who comes upon them lying almost unknown and unvisited amid the wild luxuriance of a tropical forest. They speak a melancholy language; and the mournful dirge which the winds sing among their ruins seems to have for its refrain—Change and Death.

THE END.

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